POPULAR AND UNPOPULAR ART:
Robert Brustein, Rosalind Krauss
and Michael Wood

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NOTES

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Popular and Unpopular Art

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: The subject tonight is, as you know, "Popular and Unpopular Art," which would involve, of course, the relation of the two. It is not an exact title for an inexact and slippery subject. But, it is a way of getting into the large question of the relation between what Saul Bellow recently called "Big Audience Art" and "Small Audience Art" and into the cultural changes, these fast-moving, sweeping, cultural changes, that have altered this relation. These changes involve the connection between various arts and their audiences, the effect of the media on both the creation and the consumption of art, the relation of money to art, and the developments in recent years in painting, music, film, television. Part of the problem is one of definition. Now we don't want to get into academic definitions and semantic discussions, but I think I should point out that the word "popular" and "unpopular" are loose terms referring to different phenomena, and part of the confusion in the past has come from the different use of the terms. For example, the term "popular art" has been used to describe folk art, jazz, best sellers, pop art, realistic or representational art, television, musical comedies, opera, ballet, etc. I think we can avoid confusion and hair-splitting if we keep in mind, not the definitions of these terms, but the problems we want to discuss. The question is an old one, but the formulation of the question has obviously changed because the cultural climate has changed. The classic argument for high or serious culture, the extreme version of the position that lay behind the whole Modernist period, was made by Ortega y Gasset in *The Dehumanization of Art,* which came out, if I remember correctly, in 1925, and was

EDITORS' NOTE: The evening on Popular and Unpopular Art took place at New York University on March 21, 1977. It is the second in a series of discussions made possible by a grant from the New York Council for the Humanities.

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translated into English in 1927, in which Ortega argued that unpopular art is not understood by the masses and is basically an art for artists. By "artists" he meant people with artistic sensibility, training, and judgment, not simply people who create art. He also argued that popular art is romantic art as was the art of the nineteenth century, which he regarded as a debased period in art. Oscar Wilde put the position more epigrammatically when he said "Art should never try to be popular—the public should try to be artistic."

In recent years this view has been attacked as a form of elitism and though the opposing view has not, so far as I know, been presented on a high critical level, it is really widely held and is almost a cultural assumption by many people. Perhaps the most distinguished person to have championed the new sensibility and the new attitudes toward the arts is Susan Sontag, who wrote that "The distinction between high and low culture seems less and less meaningful." She also said that such a distinction is inseparable from "the Matthew Arnold idea of culture." Susan Sontag has been misinterpreted and other statements of hers have been ignored. She certainly did not mean that cheap commercial art had suddenly become good.

There are also many half-baked arguments trying to elevate junk into art. Some of the favorite ploys are to point to the fact that Dickens has been widely read, as though anybody denies that some serious writers are more accessible or more popular than others, or that paperbacks sell lots of copies, which has to do mostly with the question of textbooks and the study of classics and not with the question of serious art that we're discussing. Another argument is that serious art is nourished by all kinds of popular and vulgar things, which is true. But by analogy, it does not follow that because we eat all kinds of things, some of it junk, we become the carrots or the hotdogs, or the hash that we eat.

The issues have been polarized and mixed up with ideology and the arguments often have nothing to do with what is going on in the arts, particularly in the kind of fiction and poetry that is outside the popular currents. Thus, neoconservatives like Daniel Bell have been arguing for nonexistent standards and

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invoking a dead past, while, in my opinion, populists like Herbert Gans in his last book, have been arguing for democracy and against elitism in a way that has nothing to do with what is actually going on in the arts. But at the risk of offending some of you, I might say that such an approach is not unusual among sociologists. Yesterday's *Times* had a statement by Harold Schoenberg, that seems relevant to what we're talking about. The piece struck me as being less an argument than a symptom of the current revolt against the idea of Modernism and the avant-garde. Schoenberg came out boldly and courageously for the latest fashions: for representation, for melody, plot, for popular art, for big audience, and he came out strongly against snobbery. He calls the new art "Neoromanticism," but it sounds a little like social realism. I had myself been arguing recently that the era of Modernism and the avant-garde is not dead. After reading Schoenberg's piece, I began to think that maybe I was wrong, that maybe that era is over. I don't know exactly, although I can guess, what our speakers are going to say. But my own opinion is that our immediate task is not to praise or to dismiss the current scene or the new era because we have to live with it, but to try to understand it so that we can make some discriminations and judgments.

Robert Brustein

"Do the old distinctions between high culture and popular culture still apply?" The phrasing of this question suggests two things: first, that people are faintly embarrassed by these old-fashioned issues which once dominated intellectual discussion, and, second, that the issues are, nevertheless, naggingly with us still. Despite the success of the counterculture in blurring their outlines in the sixties, these issues are not only with us, they clamor for debate, if not for resolution.

So my answer to this question is resoundingly affirmative. In fact, I believe that preserving the distinctions between high and popular culture may constitute the central obligation of

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American criticism. To declare my own position at once, I am a partisan of high, elitist, and experimental art. I have cast my lot with it as a critic, educator, and theater worker. But to avoid the inevitable misunderstanding, I should add that I believe fervently in the capacity of popular art to enrich and nourish high cultural forms, and that I am dedicated to cultural pluralism and diversity.

Cultural pluralism, however, must not be confused with cultural egalitarianism, which is often simply a strategem for dispensing with standards. In a healthy society, we should all have access to the art we like, but should not think it supreme just because we like it. In other words, the popular will should not be allowed to dictate to the minority taste. In England, BBC 2—a rather arcane form of television—prospers side by side with the more commercial BBC 1 and ITV, which are largely dominated by American sitcoms and game shows; The Third Programme, with its experimental drama, music, and political discussions, survives alongside the commercial radio bands, despite its tiny highbrow audience; the fringe theater is provided with subsidies, niggardly to be sure, at the same time the Arts Council is pouring money into the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company, and the paying customers are supporting the West End.

Here in the United States, cultural pluralism is defined by racial, sexual, and ethnic identifications more often than by levels of taste, probably because our diversity proceeds from a fragmented rather than a unified nation. We have black theater, music, and literature; we have feminist novels and plays and magazines; we have gay culture, etc.—each with its own special interest audience. The fact is that the socio-political ambitions of such groups usually take precedence over their aesthetic concerns. Culture therefore becomes a strategy for validating group identity, usually through catching the attention of the media.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to identify patterns of mass art and pockets of high culture, each with its own standards and shibboleths, with its own postures, gestures, images, and heroes. It is still possible to enjoy Bach cantatas or the Rolling Stones,

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or both, without fear that one will threaten the other. It is still possible to observe the energies that flow back and forth between high and popular forms without worrying that either will become paralyzed as a result. That serious theater, dance, concert music, and painting have received tremendous stimulation from popular culture is a fact too obvious to mention. Jazz has been responsible for considerable advances in American symphonic composition, while the American film has been developing genuine works of art by drawing on such popular forms as science fiction, Westerns, and private eye melodrama.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that there is a clear and present danger to the preservation of high culture in this country—and it is a danger which must be discussed not only from an aesthetic point of view, but from a social, economic, and political vantage point as well. This danger was recently described with great succinctness by McNeill Lowry when, at a resident theater conference, he said: "It is easier to popularize the arts away than to repress them." Implicit in his remark is the assumption that popularization, under certain circumstances, can constitute a form of repression, and he is right. The high arts in America are continually being subject today to a form of popularized repression, and it is perhaps a consequence of the intellectual and critical apathy towards this process in recent years that it has reached such a dangerous point.

It is to this pattern of repression that I would like to direct my remarks tonight, on the understanding that important aesthetic consequences are linked to the resolution of this essentially political-social-economic problem. My vocabulary tends to get a little apocalyptic when I talk about these cultural issues, so I should advise you that, however dire my warnings may become, I continue to believe that high or experimental or avant-garde art, as a generating metaphor, will survive any ultimate threat to its existence, partly because the concept of an advanced culture retains great vitality, regardless of how many individual artists or works of art have been popularized away, and partly because advanced culture has become so necessary to the voracious appetites of the media. Still, the most conspicuous pattern of contemporary American culture remains the exploita-

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tion and extinction of originality, invention, and imagination by cultural entrepreneurs masquerading as representatives of the popular will—distracting our attention from political and economic inequities by insisting on democratic consensus in the realm of art.

Let me try to describe this pattern by means of an image borrowed from a work of high art in popular form—Stanley Kubrick's movie, *2001*. There, you may remember, the spaceship Discovery on its way to Jupiter is controlled by a heuristically programmed algorithic computer nicknamed HAL, which is capable of supervising not only the progress and apparatus of the ship, but also the life functions of four hibernating astronauts. Those functions—hearts, lungs, kidneys, brains, etc.—are measured and monitored on a scanner screen, depicting lively blips and sparks and patterns, until the moment when HAL—having a computer's version of a psychotic episode—murders the sleeping men by cutting off their oxygen supply. The bouncing blips are transformed into single, unchanging, unbroken lines, while the screen announces that "Life Functions Have Been Terminated."

HAL's murder of these astronauts strikes me as a perfect metaphor for the neutralization of high art by the mass media, and the deadening of gifted artists by cultural entrepreneurs. Continually on the alert for any sign of novelty in the avant-garde, these media profiteers are dedicated, not to helping new artistic expression develop and grow, but rather to packaging it for instant delivery to the mass market, with the result that they transform this unpredictable vital blip into a single predictable impulse: *Life Functions Effectively Terminated.*

Anyone can supply his own examples: mine come mostly from the theater. Marlon Brando comes to public attention playing Stanley Kowalski in the stage version of *A Streetcar Named Desire.* Despite the fact that he is a sensitive character actor, subordinating his own personality to the part of a muscular ethnic oaf, Brando is immediately whisked off to Hollywood to repeat his characterization countless times, accompanied by countless imitators, until he is old enough to play the Godfather.

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Obviously, HAL is working here with the complicity of the astronaut who still remains functional; and it would be extreme to say that some vital blips will not be appearing again on the monitor. In the case of cultural institutions, HAL's intervention can sometimes be more fatal. Take the case of the non-profit resident theater movement. These organizations were first developed with the purpose of providing an alternative to, not a replacement for, the commercial theater as practiced on Broadway. Behind their rise lay a genuinely important idea—namely, that if theatrical production were to be decentralized, away from commercial pressures and glares, an organic, indigenous theater art might flourish, which might survive the hasty, often ignorant judgments of first night New York reviewers. Instead of a pickup cast of itinerant stars, collected to create a commercial hit for a group of investors, a group of collaborative artists could be assembled, devoted to developing a collective identity from one project to another, thus making an artistic statement through an entire season, or series of seasons, of theatrical works.

This idea—economically noncommercial, socially communal, politically socialist—was virtually doomed to failure in a capitalist economy devoted to manufacturing commodities for the marketplace. And it was not long before the decline of the resident theater movement was signalled by its very success. The projects so carefully nurtured in the bosom of an ensemble company first caught the eye of the media and then of commercial producers, and soon after, most of these theaters were moving their projects, lock, stock, and barrel, companies intact, from their home base to Broadway theaters.

It had become obvious to the heuristically programmed algorithic computers—the HALs of the culture—that, whatever their professed ideals, the resident theater constituted perfect replacements for the declining Shubert chain as inexpensive out-of-town tryout houses. And why not? This could bring needed funds to the undersubsidized theaters, it could give the company actors desired commercial exposure, it could attract new plays from established playwrights grown wary of a premature confrontation with New York critics, and it could flatter the regional subscription audiences with the knowledge that they

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were seeing a "hit" first, before it was acclaimed in New York. The only thing that suffered was the basic premise behind the permanent theater ensemble. Instead of developing companies, the resident theaters began to job in stars; instead of developing new writers, they featured plays by established Broadway figures; instead of exploring new production techniques, they remained satisfied with a conventional literal realism; instead of taking chances, they grew attracted to what would sell. As a result, there are at this moment no more than four or five major theaters left in the country with permanent resident companies; and at the same time that the resident theater movement is being hailed for its contributions to the culture, it has effectively abandoned its franchise and turned itself into a mechanism manufacturing products for the system.

Instead of multiplying examples of this depressing development, let me try to construct a general proposition, conceding that it is somewhat extreme and admits of considerable qualification: HAL's control over the culture is becoming a stranglehold. High and popular culture, whatever their relationship to each other, could once survive in separate pockets—popular art in slick magazines, commercial radio, Tin Pan Alley, Broadway and Hollywood, high art in little magazines, FM radio, the concert hall, off Broadway, and the art gallery. Today, a supreme power rules them all, whose name is HAL. With the promise of stardom, he can turn serious artists into corporations; with the promise of profits, he can subvert institutions; with the promise of mass appeal, he can convert vitality and variety into stagnant uniformity; with the promise of public recognition, he can absorb us all into the system. He *is* the system, and we'd better recognize that he is starting to monitor the life support apparatus of each and every one of us.

I have two questions relative to this proposition, and for the first I have no answer. How does one go about trying to identify and resist the depredations of the HAL computer without becoming self-righteous and shrill? How do you join battle with a Philistine without becoming a Pharisee? It is obvious that those who have capitulated to HAL stand in a very loose, relaxed relationship to the culture, while those who try to defy him tend

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to look like envious malcontents or anti-social exiles or quixotic Utopians. In the confrontation between minority critics and media apologists, the tone of argument is becoming accusatory, acrimonious, defensive, sullen. How can this dialogue be cleansed of its personal animus so that the underlying issues may be examined and discussed?

My other question is related: how can intellectuals effectively combat the HAL-controlled system? How does one continue to support the values of art and collaboration in a society permeated by the opportunistic commodity values of corporate capitalism? I would suggest that this can be done through a revival of criticism, through personal example, and through developing once again a set of political and economic alternatives to our present system.

Towards the end of *2001*, the surviving astronaut, Dave, saves his life by methodically disconnecting HAL's intelligence function, reducing him from a sentient being to a routine vehicular monitoring device. He does this with his bare hands, and with an obsessive concentration that is fixed unwaveringly on his goal, while the computer sings, in a wobbling bass voice, that popular favorite "A Bicycle Built For Two." HAL, in short, *can* be disconnected and disarmed, and turned back to his own culture, but only through a gigantic effort of collective will. Earlier I expressed a belief, really more of a hope, that high art would somehow resist absorption by popular culture. It can, but only if intellectuals become sufficiently united on the issues once again to participate in the resistance. Otherwise, we'd better begin preparing for a future in which all our vital functions have been terminated, and there's nothing on the scanner but a long, monotonous, uninterrupted line.

Rosalind Krauss

In addressing this audience, an audience I take it whose interest in culture is largely focused on literary issues, I am aware that, as a critic of the visual arts, I am asking you to shift your attention to a subject you find somewhat marginal to

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your own concerns. The art world during the last fifteen years has been involved in activities the literary world probably views as both incomprehensible and irrelevant to its real interest. If the world of letters was occasionally, during the 1960s, moved to think about what was going on in American painting, sculpture, or independent film, that was because these activities seemed to be generating the energy one associates with an avant-garde. And as such they had a kind of compelling cultural presence. Now in the 1970s, that energy has largely dissipated into a welter of either provincialized or demotic forms of expression to which, as a critic like Hilton Kramer continually tells us, the term "avant-garde" no longer applies. However, if the art world is now extraordinarily fractured into a set of separate, stylistically diffuse enterprises to which we have to apply a whole list of terms, like video, performance, body art, conceptual art, photo-realism in painting, or hyper-realism in sculpture, story art, earthworks, and so on, that stylistic diffusion does not mean that this work is not at all unified. However, it is collected under a slightly different banner than the one we think of as "style." This demonstrable unity is a symptom of the fact that something coherent is happening, something that should be of concern to a wider audience than simply the one for art, because for the last several decades "high culture" in general has systematically, though largely unconsciously, been building up an enormous debt to the forms of mass culture. And that debt is now being called in.

If this process is especially evident in the visual arts, it does not in any way mean that their province is the only place where this is happening. It is simply easier and more efficient to look there to see how it is happening. The list I read off just before included video art, a phenomenon which involves the artist as producer and often actor in his own television tapes which are then replayed under conditions of gallery exhibition. In creating these tapes, the artist is frequently involved in exploiting one of the technological possibilities of video, namely that the recorded image is instantaneously visible on a television monitor and thus the artist's performance is affirmed, made re-present to himself, as though that monitor were a mirror. Although this

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mirroring begins as a merely technical option, it has become central to the content of most video art, in which the interest in the mirror itself builds into an extended performance of narcissism. As an example one could take a work by Vito Acconci called *Airtime*, made in 1973, in which the artist actually uses a large mirror and, sitting in front of it with the camera behind him, records himself for about forty minutes talking to his reflected image. Referring to himself, he uses "I," but not always. Sometimes he addresses his mirrored self as "you." "You" is a pronoun that is also filled, within a space of his recorded monologue by an absent person, someone Acconci imagines himself to be addressing. But the referent for this "you" keeps slipping, shifting, returning once again to the "I" who is himself, reflected in the mirror. By doing so Acconci is playing out the drama of the shifter—in its regressive form.

The shifter is the name for that category of linguistic sign which is filled with signification only because it is empty. The word "this" is such a sign, waiting each time it is invoked for its referent to be supplied. "This chair," "this table" or "this. . . ," and we point to something lying before us. "Not that, *this*," we say. The personal pronouns "I" and "you" are also shifters. As we speak to one another, both of us using "I" and "you," the referents of those words keep changing places across the space of our conversation. I am the referent of "I" only when I am the one who is speaking. When it is your turn, it belongs to you. The gymnastics of the "empty" pronominal sign are therefore slightly complicated. And though we might think very young children learning language would acquire the use of "I" and "you" very early on, this is in fact one of the last things to be mastered. Roman Jakobson, the linguist, tells us that personal pronouns are among the first things to break down in cases of aphasia.

Airtime establishes, then, the space of a double regression, or rather, a space in which linguistic confusion operates in concert with the narcissism implicit in the performer's relationship to the mirror. But this conjunction is perfectly logical, particularly if we consider that primary narcissism—a stage in the early development of personalities suspended between auto-

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eroticism and object-love—occurs at a point which is prelinguistic, or at least not fully linguistic. In this sense the confusion between self identity and identification (or the projection of the self outward into the body of an assumed double) that characterizes narcissism corresponds to the initial inability to grasp the peculiar machinery of the shifters "I" and "you." I am stressing this connection between narcissism and a specific regressed linguistic situation at the risk of seeming to fall into line behind the now intellectually fashionable interest in semeiology. However, the evidence of narcissism as a widespread cultural phenomenon is so overwhelming that it seems ridiculous to resist whatever theoretical models there might be to deepen our understanding of it.

For this reason it seems important to notice that the shifter itself is suspended between two generically separate conditions, sharing the features of two distinct types of signs. These two types are called "symbol" and "index." The pronouns are part of the symbolic code of language insofar as they are arbitrary: "I" we say in English, but "je" in French, "ego" in Latin, "ich" in German. But insofar as their meaning depends on the existential presence of a given speaker, the pronouns (as is true of the other shifters) announce themselves as belonging to the sign type called index. As distinct from symbols, indexes establish their meaning along the axis of a physical relationship to their referents. They are the marks or traces of a particular cause, and that cause is the thing to which they refer, the object they signify. Into the category of the index we would place physical traces (like footprints), medical symptoms, or the actual personal referents of the shifters. What I am trying to establish, then, is the relationship between narcissism and a subsymbolic form of representation which is called the index. And the reason this is so suggestive for me is that in the case of video art we are confronted with a medium of photography, and photography is itself demonstrably a type of index.

If the shifter marks off a certain domain of spoken or written language as the territory of the index, the empty signs whose meanings are eventually supplied by the physical or literal presence of the object, the photograph occupies a similar

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territory within the world of visual signs or icons. In the essay "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," the film theoretician, Andre Bazin describes the indexical condition of the photograph:

> Painting is after all an inferior way of making likenesses, an ersatz of the processes of reproduction. Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mirror approximation. . . . The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model.

But what is important to understand about photography is that it is the model deracinated, torn from the context of internally generated meaning that has traditionally functioned within the visual arts to supply what we might think of as a stable system of symbolization. The photograph's status as a shifter is manifested by its need for captions, for a process of naming that works outside the image, just as there is a continual need to supply the name or referent to the invocation of the words "you" and "I".

I am drawing a parallel between the shifter's or index's need for a physical referent as a supplier of meaning and the relationship of caption to photograph as a similar source of meaning. "Image plus caption" is the important form photography has taken as it spreads through mass culture: in the newspapers, in the slick magazines, in television. It is also the form it takes in *Airtime*, for video art is obviously completely dependent upon the photographic image joined to a spoken text. In the case of *Airtime*, the text, through its routines of narcissism and its explicit linguistic dysfunction, makes very clear that art understood as a species of index produces a form of selfhood that is experienced only through the reiteration of physical presence. *Airtime* is not an isolated instance, nor is video a special phenomenon. Photography is found everywhere in the field of contemporary art. It is not only the most recent form of speculative, collecting activity, but also the force that seems to have shaped the sensibilities of an entire generation of younger

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artists. Photography is the link which connects the seemingly different enterprises of photo-realism and conceptual art, or the kind of earth-projects dependent upon documentary presentation and artist's video.

At this point in time it is not just the heightened presence of the photograph itself that is significant. Rather, it is the photograph combined with the explicit terms of the index. Everywhere one looks in seventies' art, one finds instances of this connection. In a work by Dennis Oppenheim made in 1975 called *Identity Stretch* the artist transfers the image or index of his own thumb print onto a large field outside of Buffalo by magnifying it thousands of times and fixing its traces in the ground in lines of asphalt. The meaning of this work is focused on the pure installation of presence by means of the index. And the work as it is presented in the gallery involves the documentation of this effort through an arrangement of photographs where the panels that comprise the works of Bill Beckley are also documents of presence, fixed indexically. A recent object combines photographic enlargements of fragments of the artist's body with a panel of texts, giving us the story of his physical position at a given time and place. Or David Askevold's work, *The Ambient*, is likewise made up of photographic panels captioned by text. In his case, as in Oppenheim's, we find the index pure and simple: the images are of the cast shadows of an outstretched arm falling onto a luminous plain. The appended text speaks of an interruption of meaning. All three of these works involve the filling of the empty indexical sign with a particular presence, a physical presence. The implication is that there is no convention for meaning independent of or apart from that presence.

What I am saying about the ubiquitousness of photography within "high art" at this time is that photography must not be seen as a minor art, a subsidiary form of painting that is now coming into its own. Rather, it is an entirely separate sign system, one whose nature is to resist an internally generated means of symbolization and which is now recasting the relationship between the work of art and its system of producing meaning. Further, its logic is the preeminent experience of a

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media based mass culture, involving both a resistance to the sign's or image's function within an historically understood context and a lowering of the possibilities for internal textual complexities. The features I speak of have not been internalized by the visual arts alone. They account, for example, for the appearance within literature of a particularly virulent outbreak of autobiographies, thinly masked as fiction. But I leave it to this audience to elaborate further on these connections.

Michael Wood

I'm glad Robert Brustein mentioned BBC 2, because I was thinking of a radio ancestor of BBC 2, the Third Programme, as a means of locating my own stand, if that's what it is, on some of the issues we are here to discuss. I certainly don't have a single position on the question of high versus low culture, but rather a series of (I hope, fairly firm) positions on different fronts. But I can perhaps best summarize this set of positions by saying that I believe very much in the importance of highbrow offerings like those of BBC 2 and the Third Programme, and would fight hard to defend them, but that most of the time I find I like the *idea* of the Third Programme better than I like the reality, and often *enjoy* something else far more, something sloppier and less reputable.

With this in mind, I'd like to consider a question that comes up very early in all discussions of high and low culture: the question of standards. The usual complaint is that the noble standards of high culture are being contaminated by the messy permissiveness of low culture, which has no standards at all. It is easy to identify, and to reject, the extremes in this debate. No one here, I take it, thinks that we should do without standards entirely, should consume any old junk at all, on the grounds that discriminating between junk and not-junk is discriminatory. And I take it that no one here is happy with the thought of art as merely a form of talent contest, or wine tasting ("Not a *great* writer, but . . ."), in which our major concern would be

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with scores and ranks and lists and exclusive traditions. But where does that leave us?

History plays a part here. We have undoubtedly become more permissive, or less crabbed, depending on how you feel about what we've become. I was talking the other day to F. W. Dupee, who was much associated with the Partisan Review in its early days. He was saying that his whole generation was perhaps more of a Mencken generation than they realised at the time, given to the notion that you could prove your intelligence only by knocking other people over, that criticism was necessarily a severe and punitive trade. Dupee was thinking of the early work of Mary McCarthy and the continuing work of Dwight MacDonald.

I grew up a little later and in another place, but similar assumptions were still afloat. I remember hearing F. R. Leavis lecture more than once, but the only thing I remember from the lectures themselves is an occasion on which Leavis held up, with some disgust, a book called *Critical Approaches to Literature*, by David Daiches. Leavis read out the title, paused, gave a long, righteous sniff, and said, "As if there were any *other* approaches . . ." This was the manner which made the word "critic," as Northrop Frye once said, "a synonym for an educated shrew", and I'm not sure I have actually forgiven Leavis for saying life was too short to read Fielding. When we say we want standards, we have to be sure we don't want (or don't gat) a joyless canon of classics and a lot of excommunications. But of course the ordinary meaning of criticize, in the sense of find fault with, does have something to do with its other meanings, and it is odd to hear critics say they're not going to criticize. "My intention is not to criticize Mr X . . ." No? What are you doing then? What are we doing?

First, I hope we are enjoying ourselves—critics and others, reading, seeing movies, looking at paintings, listening to music and so on. I used to think a capacity to enjoy rubbish was the first requirement for a critic of any kind. If he didn't enjoy rubbish, he wasn't a real reader or moviegoer or whatever, but some sort of cultural social worker. I now think this view is rather puritanical in its way. There are people who really don't enjoy rubbish, but aren't snobs or interlopers or masochists.

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They really don't enjoy it. The criterion, then, must simply be enjoyment itself—of whatever you enjoy. This must come before any thoughts of social relevance or moral depth or critical significance.

Second, I hope we're not telling artists what to do, asking them to write or paint as we would if we were in their shoes and had their talent. Every year, for example, I find myself defending the art of Pound and Eliot, with its elaborate allusions and vast cultural pretentions, against students who are put off by the whole name-dropping enterprise. I defend it not because I would write like that if I were a poet, but because I admire the results of the enterprise, and because a poet must do just as he likes. None of us is forced to read him, and if we want to read him, we must take the trouble to learn his language. I say this with real conviction; but it doesn't stop my wishing that so much modern poetry were not so arcane, were not so remorselessly high.

On the other hand (I think it's on the other hand), I'm regularly shocked by the promotion of popular artists into the ranks of high artists. It's a form of lazy critical inflation, and it happens particularly in film studies, where critics and students talk about Hawkes and Nicholas Ray as if they were the Dickens and the Henry James of the cinema. I hope it's not merely a literary man's prejudice to think that they're not. In my book on American films, I wrote that Robert Rossen's *The Hustler* is "a very great movie." I was reproved by a friend, who said, "It's a good movie, but it's not a great movie. If *The Hustler*'s a great movie, what's *Battleship Potemkin*?" I'm tempted to shuffle here, and talk about different kinds of greatness, but it won't do. Once a critical term has been stretched that far, it's been stretched too far. "Very great movie," for *The Hustler*, is simply an exaggeration.

Third, and finally, I hope we are responding as fully as we can to whatever we are watching or reading or listening to. And by fully here I mean with a plurality of mind which will seem very slack to many people. We need standards, but we don't have to rush to clap them on the piece of art which is our victim. We have to be ready for art to do all kinds of things, high and low; we have to recognise skills where we find them; and we have to make some sort of sense of the messages we receive. But we have

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to let art tell us what it is trying to do; we shouldn't sit waiting for it with our net of requirements. It's a trite piece of advice, I know, but this willing suspension of preconceptions is manifestly hard to practise.

The difficulty with popular art is a certain kind of emptiness. I'm not thinking of the vacuity which moralising critics keep finding there, although there is a fair amount of vacuity going the rounds, of course. What I have in mind is an absence where serious art offers us a presence. It is easy, I think, to enjoy the skills of a show like *Kojak*, or *Columbo*, or *The Rockford Files*, or *The Name of the Game*—the way it's put together, the style of the editing, the pace of the thing, the use of music, and so on. And it's also easy to interpret this sort of show sociologically—to wonder why nearly all current television thriller series feature policemen and policewomen as heroes and heroines, for example, and to wonder what happened to private eyes and fugitives and outlaws. Rockford, in the show I've just mentioned, is clearly a deliberate anachronism. But there's the rub. These sort of interests—I'll call them technical and sociological interests—are almost always marginal or academic in the appreciation of art as we usually understand it. Who cares how *Anna Karenina* is put together, or what it says about Russia in the 1870s? Well, we care. But that's not why we're reading the book. As I've suggested, we can be unduly solemn in looking to our art for a criticism of life. But that's not a reason for being happy with an art which looks as if it simply can't offer such a criticism.

We have arrived, in fact, at the good old distinction between art and entertainment. Art disturbs us, and entertainment doesn't. Or to put that more precisely, art disturbs us a lot, and entertainment disturbs us too, but as little as it can—its business is to make its disturbances as unnoticeable as possible. I am content with that, and I think many of our worries are settled once we can tell art from entertainment, and enjoy both, and welcome their increasingly infrequent mingling. But even here we should be careful not to freeze ourselves into our terms. They are only words, meant to help us, not to imprison us. Hitchcock, for example, like Chaplin, is an entertainer and an artist,

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although not usually both at the same time. Some fairly fine critical judgments are called for. I think *North by Northwest*, for example, is an elegant work of art, while *Psycho* is a rather crude piece of entertainment. But opinions will differ and the principle is perhaps more important than the particular opinion. Most of Hitchcock's films are comedies, it seems to me, and comedy is an interesting genre when it comes to high art and low art, since comedy is a low art which becomes high if it lasts. No one would want to suggest that Dickens or Shakespeare was not an entertainer. And if we wish to save our standards and our faith in the highness of high art by asserting that something else is "only entertainment", we have to be ready for the rejoinder which suggests a certain poverty where we want to see riches, the reply which says that the art we are preferring is "only art."

* * *

MARSHALL BERMAN: It seems to me that there's one really genuine and reasonable motive for getting involved with art—that, in a sense if you didn't want to really reach people in some essential way you probably wouldn't become an artist in the first place. There are much easier ways to make a living after all.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: You want to comment on that?

ROBERT BRUSTEIN: It is a very understandable motive to want to reach people and to reach as many people as possible but I don't think that's what makes artists artists in the first place. I think there's a compulsion. Elaine May said "Art is the best medium of communication we have," and she was joking of course; it's not a medium of communication at all. It has a function of communication but it's not a medium of communication; it arises out of compulsion, and ultimately the greatest artists do reach enormous numbers of people, but not right away. If they are reaching the greatest number of people right away, the chances are that they have become that long uninterrupted monotonous blip. Because that makes them more accessible, recognizable. They're not responding to their inner hunger, but rather to their hunger to, as you say, reach . . .

LARRY RIVERS: Which part of history are you referring to about artists who weren't immediately recognized?

PHILLIPS: Why don't you get up there, Larry? Go ahead.

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RIVERS: You made it seem, at least by that remark—I, didn't mean to get into a long thing, I had other things I wanted to talk about of course—but you were saying that immediate recognition is, almost, for you, a sign of a lack of quality. Is that what you're saying?

BRUSTEIN: I'm not saying that . . .

RIVERS: I mean, if you look at history . . .

BRUSTEIN: More often than not, it *is* in the modern period. It's a Modernist problem, but one that we've lived with since the middle of the nineteenth century.

RIVERS: So you feel that things have moved to such a point that actually a prerequisite for quality is somehow years of not being understood.

BRUSTEIN: I'm not setting down any principles for what creates quality. All I'm saying is that the artist who listens to his inner demons or her inner demons and creates out of those demons, more likely than not is perceiving something that will not be immediately perceived by large numbers of people.

RIVERS: It could be someone who has a . . . just some natural exuberance, and he's not dealing with demons. Somehow he puts together other ingredients and finds that from the moment that he starts to put these ingredients together, someone says, "Oh, I see what you mean."

BRUSTEIN: It's possible and it happens.

PHILLIPS: Did you become a painter, Larry, to reach a lot of people? Is that why you became a painter?

RIVERS: In speaking to Marshall Berman, you were making the point that a man who immediately is understood and liked and rewarded is somehow immediately suspect.

BRUSTEIN: Absolutely not. Oh, no, not at all. I'm saying more often than not in the modern period this has been true, but it doesn't mean it's absolutely true. There's no absolute in this case. But if one looks at the great artists of the modern period—I don't know if any of us can agree on them—just to haul a percentage out, about ninety percent of them had to . . .

PHILLIPS: You weren't an immediate success were you Larry?

RIVERS: Was I? Well, I actually think that I did a gouache, I think I finished it—this is my own experience and it doesn't say anything about the experience of others, really—but I think a psychiatrist friend of mine, who was actually a psychiatrist student, psychoanalyst student . . . I'd just finished it and dried it and he bought if for fifteen bucks. I don't know if that answers the question, but . . .

PHILLIPS: It does, obviously.

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RIVERS: I did sell something.

PHILLIPS: You get more than that now.

RIVERS: Yes, but, while I'm up here I may as well get into this other thing I wanted to bring up. I saw a TV program on Louis Pasteur the other night and how he discovered rabies and what he had to go through and the criticism that he received from the Academy and some of his contemporaries and then I began—I think it was while I was urinating,—actually, one day, afterwards . . . —You talked about experimental art and experiments as a kind of ideal in art that I think many of us have, actually without realizing, have been subject to most of our lives—as if there was something in experimenting that almost, in some sense, had the value that experimentation has in science: that by opening the frontiers you rid man of disease; you find out ideas about mental health; you broaden his horizons; you make life more livable, more pleasant. You get rid of disease; you raise all sorts of comfort levels and things like that and I was just wondering how much it really means in art. I mean, is the cancer that experimentation is dealing with in the field of art, boredom? In other words, if you have disease in the area of health or science, that you're sort of helping mankind by doing something about, is experimentation dealing with boredom, which is disease of another sort. I mean that this is the realm of art; so I was just wondering how you felt really about experimentation. I mean really about altering our feelings of boredom.

PHILLIPS: You want to answer that? Or you want to let it go . . . let other people talk?

BRUSTEIN: I could either answer it in one sentence or five thousand pages, but I would just say two things: one is . . . .

RIVERS: It was actually directed at Rosalind Krauss too, I mean.

BRUSTEIN: All right.

PHILLIPS: I can give you a quotation from Ben Jonson. He said, "Art hath an enemy. Ignorance." That's the cancer.

BRUSTEIN: It has another enemy, boredom, I mean I really think the mortal sin against the holy ghost in art is to be boring.

RIVERS: Isn't experimentation a way of making room for yourself in this choked river?

PHILLIPS: Why don't we go on? Why don't we just say that the word "experiment" in painting doesn't mean the same thing as "experiment" in science. They're really two different processes.

RIVERS: Yes, but I'm saying that artists have been made to feel that they're accomplishing, that they're involved with a very fantastic ideal.

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PHILLIPS: Well, they're mistaken. Anybody else? I think I saw your hand. Go ahead.

ANDREW ARATO: Since I think that the discourse that we're participating in is not artistic but rather theoretical, I'll try to make a theoretical remark and try to make it to the second speaker, to Rosalind Krauss, because I think that was the only presentation that operated on something which approximates a level of theoretical seriousness. My question would be, and I think I would like her to answer it if possible, is admitting really that the attitude of so-called "High Art" is indefensible, even as a kind of linguistic strategy—one would really still have to ask what remains antinomic or in principle, dualistic and unresolvable, in both your approach and I think, Marshall Berman's too, although he, in a way through humor, bypassed the issues; but I think it was there in his comments too. If you incorporate mass art into a serious self-critical and reflective artistic move or strategy, which has no longer any halos and which no longer feels foreign to the matter and the materials which not just new advanced methods of technical reproduction but also everyday life dabbles with; assuming even that move, does one not, nonetheless, as soon as one makes any kind of formal construction, negate the very possibility of moving forward, or moving back? My question really is something like this: does the incorporation of the experience of mass culture lead to anything that overcomes the very esotericism of all that has been avant-garde in the twentieth century? It seemed to me that exactly what you have been referring to is more esoteric than anything that the two other speakers have referred to, much more so in terms of the current spectrum of culture. It would seem to me that what you have to respond to is whether your strategy allows for any kind of move back. My premise certainly would be agreeing with Mr. Brustein that art is not communication, but art is communication in a potential kingdom of ends that at the moment doesn't exist. It's a call for communication in a realm that has to be created, but assuming that, I would want to really ask whether a strategy that draws from mass art is able to establish any link toward even a partial communication where there wasn't any in the past?

ROSALIND KRAUSS: Well, it seems to me that you're very accurate in saying that video art is not a mass art. I mean, it's addressed to a very small audience and the kind of examples that I was citing are in galleries in Soho; they are not understood or particularly cared about by a large audience. They do not look like anything that would be recognized by a mass audience as its art. So audiences understand what art is being made for it, and my point really was not that I think

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that these strategies reconciled audiences of culture; they don't. The work that I'm talking about continues to be inaccessible to a large audience. It continues to be felt as boring and as incomprehensible. What I'm really interested in is to see how it has, however unconsciously, assumed a great deal of what a mass audience does find satisfying, which I was trying to characterize as some sort of pure presence. And there's a sort of incredible critical confusion about locating that issue of presence which I think is really rampant now in all forms of what we call "experimental culture." Experimental theater, experimental whatever. The notion that it has a small audience somehow has put us to sleep about what its sources of signification really are, and what it is depending on, what it has unconsciously assumed as a kind of given, formally. I know I'm not really answering what you've asked.

PHILLIPS: You've answered it.

ROCKWELL ANDERSON: My question's for you, Bob. It was interesting to me that the central image that you took for your talk, although it was from a movie, *2001*, was not an image of the processes of art itself, but of science. And it seems to me that what you've been saying all along is that the problems within art are the result of certain exigencies, that come from outside the world of art, that art is determined by the entire culture, by the political system, by the economic system, and so forth. And my question is, that since art takes up such a really small amount of the psychic energy of the entire society, to lecture artists or critics about a situation in which their actions are determined anyway, I wonder if that isn't a waste of time, whether, it's a problem for politicians rather than for aestheticians or whatever, and where should the locus of the criticism be?

BRUSTEIN: You picked up very perceptively the shadow behind the speech I made. I was making a political point. I wasn't making the point to politicians; I was making it really to intellectuals, political intellectuals, cultural intellectuals. And what I was trying to say, in effect, was that it is futile to talk about the question in the way I've been talking about it for a number of years without thinking of some form of political change, that the problem is becoming so fundamental that applying aspirin or anodynes or something to it is useless. That we really do have to think if we're serious, if anyone can agree with what I'm saying, and I gather there're still very few that do; but, if there are numbers that can, then perhaps the intellectuals can go back to doing what they once used to do, namely to begin to formulate some political solutions, some political theory, that might help in the resolution of the cultural problem. Art, culture, and

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politics are virtually inseparable, and no one really is addressing himself these days, that I can see, to the political question. So, as I say, the question is not addressed to Jimmy Carter, but rather to, you know, who is our present-day Marx? We don't have one. Who's our present-day Engels?

HILTON KRAMER: Is art to formulate a solution to our cultural problems?

PHILLIPS: Did you hear Hilton's question, Bob?

KRAMER: I guess I'll put the question this way: was there ever a time that critics, intellectuals really, provided us with a political solution to our cultural problems; and if so, when?

BRUSTEIN: Well, I think Marx did. Marxist theory did involve cultural theory. I don't think it's appropriate for our time. That's why I say we need an adjustment for our time. I don't see those formulations taking place today, so my answer would be that the question remains the same but the solution has to be different.

MORRIS DICKSTEIN: I wonder if we could get back to the question of the relation of popular or mass art to so called "High Art," but looking at what kinds of art these are. What do they share—categories which would make them both "art" or is it inappropriate to call them both "art." Perhaps we should call one "art" or one "entertainment" and so on? I think that Mike Wood has made an interesting point in saying that we tend if we become self-conscious about mass art to look at it in terms of technique—the way we don't feel called upon to do with *Anna Karenina.* In fact, often when we do look at *Anna Karenina,* or a book like that, we find that it sort of breaks all the rules and it seems very sloppy artistically and the reasons why it works and moves us and so on and is permanent don't seem to fit into any of our canons for the art of fiction or something like that. Just let me say a few words about, what I think are some of the relationships between Mass Art and High Art. I think we're all aware that we can't make a sharp split, partly because there are a great number of high artists who have used and appropriated and been influenced by elements of mass art. In some cases, as Mr. Arato says, in doing that they turn it into something that's even more a piece of High Art, even more a piece of minority art by a very special kind of appropriation of popular materials. In other cases, we get that remarkable kind of artist, like Dickens, or say a book like *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* which was a best-seller in many countries, where a good deal of Modernist difficulty seems to exist with a great deal of popular appeal. We often look at high art critically, and we've developed many critical categories for dealing with High Art,

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but there's been very little attempt to look seriously at mass art to determine how it's put together or what makes its appeal. One example that comes to mind is the recent television multi-part series *Roots* which apparently was watched by more people than any event in the history of this country. In thinking about *Roots* just now, for a moment, it strikes me that one interesting question would be to think of the relation between technique, which Mike pointed out, and ideology in mass art. In his book on the movies, Mike deals with mass art in terms of a series of myths—of works that are not necessarily realized as works of art, but do incarnate a cultural ambience, an ideological ambience in a way that is peculiarly valuable for the cultural historian. Now it seems to me that when we look at something like *Roots*, we see first of all, the transformation of a sort of advanced guard Black Power ideology of about ten years ago into something that now becomes suitable for popular entertainment in the South, as elsewhere. In watching *Roots* I was constantly amazed that this was considered, something in which no white characters were depicted as being any good, that the few who seemed to be any good turned out to be almost always worse than anyone else, that this view was going over as mass myth. It seems that there were two ways of looking at it. One was that this was going to be appreciated, indeed, was appreciated by the very same audience that once could enjoy *Gone With The Wind* and *Birth of A Nation*, partly because there were certain kinds of technical elements that had to do with great scenes, emotions, characters—the sort of thing that Modernist art has tended to leave out—which could sweep one up emotionally, in a way so that the ideology or what was being said became irrelevant: that it didn't really matter whether it was *Gone With The Wind* or whether it was *Roots*, though supposedly they had diametrically opposed viewpoints, because, in a sense, they were the same piece of work. They were dealing with the same kinds of emotions and manipulating them in the same sort of way. One other point though, to contradict that, is that in fact among Black people, among others, the program did seem to have an immense ideological impact. It reached people in a way that mass art often does. It takes something which may have been said in a very difficult, elusive way by advanced guard ideologists or high artists and turns it into the kinds of popular myths that Mike has analyzed in his book, in a way that moves people, that communicates, as Marshall Berman said perhaps in a simplified, bastardized form, but does so in a way that will reach people ideologically and emotionally and technically and . . . This is not an answer to the relationship between mass art and

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High Art, but it seems to me that these are some of the questions that criticism really ought to be called upon to deal with. It's simply not enough to establish standards, to rule out *Roots* and other things like that from the category of art, or High Art. Even if artists do not have as their basic impulse to communicate, but simply like what they're doing, it seems to me it's still incumbent upon criticism to consider what kind of communication is actually taking place when a hundred million or a hundred-fifty million are sort of vibrating in tune to a particular person's fantasies or researches or whatever they are.

PHILLIPS: There's one thing I'd like to question that both Michael Wood and Morris Dickstein seem to agree on and that is that when we look at television programs, we look at them technically. We try to analyze the technique. I wonder how many of you feel the way I do, when I look at *Kojak*, and *Gunsmoke* and *Columbo*; it never occurs to me to analyze the technique. Not only does it not occur to me but I wouldn't even know how to. The technique involves certain high skills that these television studios in Hollywood have at their command.

DICKSTEIN: Besides, the techniques of commercials are more interesting.

PHILLIPS: That's right, as a matter of fact I find that I mean not to look at the commercials, but often do look at the commercials and don't look at the program.

KRAUSS: One thing that amazes me is that Mr. Dickstein could say that the audience for *Roots* was the same as the audience for *Gone With The Wind*, or *Birth of A Nation*. I mean, how can you assume that that audience, an audience that was raised on television could possibly be the same—an audience that has really been put to sleep by television could possibly be the same as the other two audiences you mentioned?

DICKSTEIN: Well, it's the same audience though, the same hundred million that just watched *Gone With The Wind*.

KRAUSS: I'm talking about the original audience for *Gone With The Wind*.

MICHAEL WOOD: William, can I just say one thing about television. I mean, I wasn't suggesting that we all sit looking at technical things on television. I was merely suggesting that in fact the ways in which we normally do watch television are not something we have a sensible critical vocabulary for. We have a reasonable vocabulary for technical stuff, and we have a reasonable vocabulary for sort of sociology, myth and whatever; but the actual business of whatever

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goes on between us and the TV screen, we don't have any dialect with which to describe that.

PHILLIPS: I'm not sure that's true. Do we have any? I don't do much talking about it. Do you discuss it?

WOOD: No, no, that's my point. I mean we don't, do we? We have all kinds of languages to talk about books when we've read a book, you see. You read a book and you can talk about all kinds of things.

PHILLIPS: What's the meaning of your distinction between art and entertainment?

WOOD: Exactly the same as Bob's, but I think it can be found in more places than, than perhaps we think.

PHILLIPS: What can be found?

WOOD: Well, if we simply assume that there is no art in television because of the way we watch it . . .

PHILLIPS: Do you have examples of art in television? I mean, so we could be concrete.

WOOD: Well, for example, any decent movie seen on television, I would say.

PHILLIPS: Well, that's not what we're talking about. That's reproduction.

WOOD: No, I mean, let's be clear. If we're talking about the structure of the American television industry, then we're talking about one thing, and if we're talking about television as a medium, potentially in other hands or used in other ways, it, it doesn't seem to me a final, vital question.

BRUSTEIN: Don't you think there's something inherent and limited about the medium, though?

WOOD: No, I don't, no.

BRUSTEIN: Just let me elaborate for a moment on that. That point is important. The fact is that the film is a romantic medium in the sense that you get absorbed into it, you get pulled into it; whereas in television, you sit in front of it and you don't register. You can see a film on television, but it's a different experience from seeing a film in the theater. First of all, you're alone, usually, secondly you'd feel silly if you laughed or silly if you cried or silly if you had an emotional expression in response to it. So what you're doing is sitting there as flat as the screen you're watching.

LEONARD KRIEGEL: All during the discussion I was fascinated by what seemed to me to be essentially two diametrically opposed views from Professor Brustein and Professor Wood and I want to make a few comments about that because my own sympathies are so much with Professor Brustein. You kept on referring to the judgmental qualities

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and you were constantly kind of apologizing for having listened to the Third Programme, I think, or something of that nature. Now I wonder if that doesn't illustrate one of the problems that we have over here. I think it's true we have to get back to a kind of political basis for criticism and it's exactly that that we're missing now. We're also missing any sense of what a critic does and why he does it. Edmund Wilson in the twenties criticized popular culture and he wrote some very, very fine pieces on it—on vaudeville, on film, on jazz. Nonetheless, the distinction between "High" and what I suppose we might call the "Low" culture was a very clear distinction in his mind. Not only was it a clear distinction in his mind, he was a product of High Culture without apology. What I found rather fascinating in your talk was the idea that it's the High Culture which judges the Low Culture. What you were really saying, it seems to me, what I was, gathering from you—as my students might say, your "vibes," God help us!—is that it is the Low Culture now which today judges the High Culture. And judges not only the High Culture, and this is where the danger is, but judges the High Culture's right to exist. It is not that the Low Culture any longer has to justify itself to *Partisan Review*, but that *Partisan Review*, and what *Partisan* stands for, now has to justify itself to *Time Magazine*, and that's the danger that we're facing. When you think about High and Low Culture, when you speak about High and Low Culture, if you ignore that point, then you ignore what seems to me to be essential to any argument of culture today.

WOOD: That wasn't what I thought I'd said. My impression was, that what I'd said was that High Culture seems to me obsessively a matter of judging and that Low Culture has no judgments at all. And I'm suggesting if we're to judge sensibly, we need simply more agility and, and fewer battle lines.

PHILLIPS: There's a point at which a critic has to simply look at TV and say zilch is zilch because that's what it is. It's zilch.

WOOD: If it is, it is, yes; but, you have to look to see.

RIVERS: How many art galleries have you gone to where you've come out with the same feeling?

WOOD: How many poems have you read, read of the most serious and elegant and learned kind that are absolutely junk.

PHILLIPS: No, but he's making a different point. He's saying the category is junk and the category of poetry is not junk, Michael. I'm not defending him, but I'm trying to repeat what he's saying.

WOOD: I'm not being as clear as I should be. I'm simply saying I don't

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think there's any category that is junk in the hands of a talented artist.

PHILLIPS: You realise what you're doing is paying a tribute to great art.

WOOD: That's right. But I've never intended to do anything other than pay tribute to great art; I just think it can be found in many places.

STANLEY KAUFFMAN: I just want to ask a question that's on the letter that was sent out and bring it to the attention of the panelists and the audience. I don't think it's been discussed. "Is there a genuine avant-garde today or has its role been taken over by the media?" I don't think Ms. Krauss was talking about that. She was talking how the use of a medium can make a difference in avant-garde art. That's quite a different subject, as acrylics or plexiglass can be used in avant-garde art.

First of all, I'd like to know what the question means and then I'd like, if someone understands it, to try to answer it. "Is there an avant-garde today?" That's clear enough. "Or has its role been taken over by the Media?"—I don't know what that means.

KRAUSS: Mr. Kauffman, I was trying to address that question. I was saying that I think that the avant-garde has absorbed the Media in a very deep way and the meaning that is now being produced by that avant-garde—not just in painting and sculpture, but in literature and the theater as well—is now mostly a recapitulation of the message of the original media—of newspapers, television, etc.

KAUFFMAN: I agree with a good deal of what you said and I'd just like to add a couple of examples in a different field. I wrote a little something about this lately, that younger German and Austrian writers, playwrights, poets, novelists, film-makers, who came to maturity after the Second World War, grew up in a country which either had no popular culture, or had remnants, tag-ends of a popular culture they didn't trust. The vacuum had to be filled because children and young adolescents don't live by High Culture. They live by popular culture and American culture filled that gap for them: Armed Forces Radio, films, comic books, etc. They then grew to maturity, nourished in a certain way by popular culture. But they then ingested it and transcended it and you get plays like Peter Handke's, in which rock music is exalted into something else. You get films like Wim Wender's. You get films like the ones that came from France in the fifties and the sixties. And you get a kind of union that is one index of what a future could be, toward a solution of what in this country is largely still a battle. It's almost as if that starvation period that existed for this young group after the Second World War

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was a kind of clearing ground for them to take a fresh breath. Then you start on this now one hundred-and-fifty-year-old battle between what is good and what is unworthy.

BRUSTEIN: Stanley, American playwrights have been trying to do that for the last fifteen years.

KAUFFMAN: Sam Shepard, Chris Durang, William Hauptman . . .

BRUSTEIN: It's an absorption of the mass media in the same way that Handke did, much more powerfully than Handke did, in an attempt to use those effects as metaphors, as myths, on which to build a form of theatrical art.

And if I can answer your second question. I thought I was trying to answer that before. I think that you're right, that the question is improperly phrased, that what is implicit in the question is this: are the media going to the avant-garde and mediating, as media do, between the avant-garde and popular commercial culture? Are they bringing the avant-garde instantly to the attention of newspapers, of television audiences and, let's say, of commercial entrepreneurs, who thereupon take that and commercialize it? Richard Foreman works off Broadway. Joe Papp finds him and has him do a kitsch version of *Three-Penny Opera.* André Serban does a magnificent work, *Fragments of A Trilogy.* Joe Papp finds him again and puts on *The Cherry Orchard.* Robert Wilson has not yet been touched in that way.

KAUFFMAN: But still he's changed by the audience change.

BRUSTEIN: Perhaps, but the tendency is to identify artists much more quickly than ever before, because of the instant replay effect of the media. To identify the genuine artists of the culture as they are beginning to emerge and evolve, grab them and fix them, transfix them, impale them as it were, and stop their growth. So I think that's what the question implied and all the panelists tried to address that question, if I'm not mistaken.

We are saddened by the death of

Mason Gross

a friend and co-chairman of our advisory board.

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STORIES

Jerry Bumpus

CHUMS

He didn't try to escape but turned his back on the schoolyard, that wide, rolling prairie with clumps of brush and, far off, the brick maze where every morning we found things left the night before by roving gangs, strange, horrible things which were beyond our imaginations, though some of us, inspired by the strange needs of innocence, kept them and speculated on their uses, their meanings, with results that were invariably exciting, invariably terrifying.

The boys surrounded him, shoved him around, tripped him, kicked him—he didn't try to defend himself. He was incredibly thin, a stick, with a pale narrow face and sharp nose. I don't know why the gang had suddenly noticed him, why they singled him out. It's doubtful that he had done anything to provoke them, but the gangs that roamed the schoolyard and who in later years roamed the streets, occasionally returning nights to attack the school building for old time's sake and perform depravities in the brick maze—these gangs didn't require provocation. Straightforwardly vicious, they existed in a state of obliviousness: everything they did, every gesture, had a bland gracefulness, a stonelike superiority.

They got him down, took turns kicking him, then they stood him up and a boy on each side socked him back and forth good and fast—so fast his face blurred. The gang cheered, and I admit it outdid anything I had ever seen them do. The way his head twanged back and forth, faster and faster!—it was fascinating.

The cheering distracted one of the boys punching him; he broke the rhythm and the victim, propelled by the force of the last punch, stumbled to the edge of the tight circle, somehow through them . . . and farther. He was running!

In disbelief we watched as he ran very slowly, barely lifting his legs, leaning forward very far as if that might make him go faster, and his running became a spectacle in itself. Stunned, the gang let him reach the school building and turn the corner.

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"Come on," someone called, and they trotted to the building. The gang rounded the corner, came back, stood with their hands on their hips, looking at each other. Their fine little victim, the thin, narrow-faced boy, had disappeared. They even boosted someone up to look in a window, but he wasn't inside.

"We have not got him," one of them said and the others turned and looked at him as he said slowly and blankly again, "We have not got him." They walked off a ways and immediately forgot about the narrow-faced boy. Such a disappearance would keep me and the other secretive youths like me entertained, dazed, and content for weeks; we would be lost and tantalized in it, our parents would think we were sick or in love or in trouble with the cops. A disappearance would keep us going, for we loved the impossibility, we couldn't resist it; I would even go so far as to say we lived for it.

But the gang, of course, immediately forgot the victim had ever existed. They wandered off and soon they could be seen, far off, swarming across the prairie in running combat with another gang.

I went again to the corner of the building and stood with my nose to the corner, my left eye staring down the endless south wall of the building, and my right eye looking down the east wall. And I discovered the gang's victim was still there! In his extreme thinness he had become the corner, his narrow face and sharp nose becoming part of the sheer line of the corner. I stared into his eyes and whispered, "I see you."

The corner moved where his mouth was: "Don't tell."

"Yes. I'll tell them," I said. "Unless you give me something."

The corner closed as he closed his eyes and I could see the corner straining around him as he tried to disappear totally. But he couldn't. He opened his eyes. "All right," he said.

"What'll you give me?"

"I don't have anything. I'll let you hit me."

"Fuck that. I want something to show. Something I can think about."

"I'll show you my place."

"I don't want to see your place. I *want* something."

"It's not where I live. It's my special place."

"Is it a club?"

"It's better than that. Something is there. In it."

"What?"

The corner wobbled as he shook his head.

"Is it a gang?" I said.

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"It's like a person," he whispered.

He had me. I asked more questions, but he wouldn't tell me anything more. I stood between the corner and the playground, and he emerged from the corner, though by now the gang was at least half a mile away, beyond the brick maze: clouds of dust rose above them, for they had apparently won the battle with the rival gang and were now stomping them.

He stood close to me, looking at me with his severe, narrow face. He expected me to ask how he had done that with the corner, but I refused to ask. He turned and started off. I followed, calling, "When?"

He went faster, and I ran to keep up. "When?" I yelled. "When, goddamn you?"

Now he was running across the playground as before, not moving his arms or shoulders but leaning rigidly forward from the waist, his legs not bending at the knees but stiffly swinging like scissors—but he was running very fast, and I realized he had earlier run slowly to deceive the gang, sly fellow. He outran me easily. I stopped and as he topped a hill he called over his shoulder, "After school," and disappeared.

I spotted him after school in the crowd pouring from the building. He was hurrying, trying to lose himself among the other boys and girls. But I was right behind him. I reached out and grabbed his neck. I swung him around and smiled in his face. "Remember me?"

His eyes were enormous and yellow, with great wide whites. The yellow was unlike anything I had ever seen—yellow like a cat's, maybe, but deep and far like plains.

I turned away, angry, for he was grinning at me; he knew his eyes had surprised me. His grin took the corners of his mouth up sharply, making his mouth a quaint V under the V of his nose.

"I want to see that thing," I said.

"Sure," he said. "Let go." I let go his neck and we walked on. "Nice day," he said. "My name is Bob. Where do you live? Do you have a dog?" He smiled slyly as we crossed a street. The crowd of children was thinning; in another block they had scattered completely; he and I were alone. "This way," he said, and we turned down a street with few houses, and those the dark, run-down sort, some with boarded windows, ruined trees leaning into each other. Several blocks on, the street gave way to a dirt road, overgrown and untraveled.

"Do you live down here?" I said.

He jerked his hand, thumb up, over his shoulder: beyond empty fields with brush and thickets hulking larger and larger in the shadows

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of late afternoon, were hills, and beyond the hills a water tower hid in a clump of trees and low houses.

At the end of the road was a cemetery. He went up the path and under the iron arch that said *Bethel* in leafy iron letters. He looked back at me.

We followed a grass-covered lane through tombstones; statues of angels here and there looked off as if frozen stiff in the middle of doing something they started long ago. We topped a hill; the cemetery went on for miles, and I saw the first of the square stone houses. Not far ahead was a big one, a mausoleum as large as an apartment house, with barred windows set high in the walls, almost to the slate roof.

He turned off the lane and went straight to the mausoleum. He turned very slowly and smiled his V smile, his big yellow eyes looking right at me. "Here we are."

Still looking at me, he reached out the other direction, took the handle of the big iron door, and it opened smoothly. "It's in there," he said.

"What is?"

"The thing."

I shook my head.

"You can stand here and see it," he said. He stepped inside. I waited, then went to the door and looked into the long, empty room. Gray, distant light spilled down from the high windows. He stood half-way down the room, gripping the handle of one of the square steel doors that lined the walls. "*Don't,*" I whispered, but he opened it, staring at me, and reached inside. There was a screech, then a grumble of rollers as he pulled out a casket—it was huge. And all the while he was looking at me, his face locked in that V grin, his eyes big.

I backed out and pulled the door almost closed, until there was a crack just wide enough for my face. I glanced behind me—there was nothing but the tombstones, the angels, the sky going away to night. I put my face to the crack in the door.

He lifted the casket lid, his head jerked my way and, grinning, he stepped up onto the side of the casket and unbuckled his belt and unzipped his pants. "*Don't,*" I whispered. He grinned, dropped his pants. He didn't wear underwear. He put his arms out straight and swayed his hips. He kicked up his right foot, then his left, and clasping his hands behind his head, squatted down, his knees wide apart. Then he hopped down into the casket, reached down, and hooked big legs, bent at the knees, over the sides of the casket. He knelt, staring down seriously.

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"*What are you doing*?" I whispered.

He ignored me.

I opened the door and tiptoed down the room. Just as I was about there, the legs slowly lifted straight up.

"Oh," I said and stood there.

After a while he stood and, hands on his hips, stepped up on the side of the casket again. The legs in the casket remained lifted in a big V, and he nodded toward them and said, "Want a turn with Rosie?"

I didn't answer.

He laughed and tumbled into the casket, banged down onto his knees, and lunged forward. "Uh!" I heard.

The light dimmed, the walls dissolving. "What time is it?" he called over his shoulder. I looked at my Mickey Mouse and told him. He bounced around in the casket, then jumped up and the legs lowered. He climbed out, closed the casket, and pushed it on its rollers back into place and shut the steel door. "It's cold in here," he said, quickly putting on his pants.

We carefully shut the mausoleum door, not banging it, and ran up the lane to the cemetery gate. At the road we cut across the empty fields toward the water tower looming above the low houses. His house wasn't as bad as some of the others. He asked if I wanted to come in. I said no.

He waved and went in. I started off, then came back and looked in a window. He was in there with his family—a mother, a father, a sister and a little brother. They had joined hands and were dancing around the dinner table. I heard them laughing. Then he saw me looking in, and as he danced by he squinted his yellow eyes and stuck out his tongue.

I backed away and turned to the darkness to find my way home.

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Jerry Bumpus

THE OUTDOORSMAN

Because Bogsedge was rather oozy even on the brightest days, Mrs. Clarinda Sheehan had a table and chairs brought out onto the terrace; there she remained, fidgeting and looking down the lawn to the brush creek and the heath beyond.

As the clock chimed four, Mrs. Sheehan heard the canine grunting and loud panting that always preceded her neighbor on the lane, Ursula Dolmon. Around the corner she came in her dogcart pulled by two tawny beasts straining for all they were worth. Short of the terrace steps the dogs collapsed, their tongues lolling, their eyes rolling back in their heads.

At that moment the French doors opened and Tina Buell, Mrs. Sheehan's niece, appeared. "Wonderful!" the young lady trilled and ran down the steps to assist Ursula Dolmon who was tilting the dogcart in her struggle to climb out.

Though Tina Buell was a neat little beauty with a perfect oval face, large and lucid eyes, and lips as purely shaped as the dreams of innocence, she lacquered her face to an otherworldly gleam, glued black sprigs to her eyes so when she blinked it appeared chorus lines of spiders were kicking up, and with a metallic unction she greased her lips to the obdurate sheen of aluminum. Tina's hair, today a golden green called Singapore Fudge, was knotted into a "beehive," and she wore a pink, dollish dress identical to one a movie starlet wore once—and alas forever in the pulpy catacombs of one of Tina's movie mags, as said starlet goes forth to dubious doings with her escorts, a sixty-year-old latex magnate and a celebrated young rake-hell with the flared nostrils and bulging eyes of a stallion. Tina wore green hose which with the fulsome glint of the South American anaconda succeeded in transforming the slender delicacy of her calves and thighs to a rippling muscularity.

Tina ran down the steps—breathtaking feat in itself, considering her shoes, plastic "platforms" seven inches high clamped to Tina's feet

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with wide brass bands—and reached Ursula Dolmon just as the dogcart was about to flip over on top of the large lady.

"Oh Ur, how wonderful of you to come!" Tina said. "You will get to meet my husband!"

"There, child," Ursula Dolmon said, leaning on Tina and bending her like a twig as they climbed to the terrace where Mrs. Sheehan called, "Bless you for coming," and went back to her nervous, waiting: now she stared at the wooden bridge up the way.

"Well," Ursula said. "So it's tea on the terrace, is it? All this for him, eh?" Not waiting for a reply from Mrs. Sheehan, Ursula called loudly, "My chair!" and two servants rushed out with an oak bench.

"Isn't it exciting, Ur?" Tina said. "My husband is an outdoorsman!"

"There, child," Ursula said, tapping Tina's cheek with a thick finger.

"What really is an outdoorsman, Ur?" Tina said, kneeling at her feet.

Ursula called over her shoulder, "Haven't you told her anything?" In reply there was an incomprehensible twittering. "My child," Ursula said to Tina, "an outdoorsman is one who has such a tremendous urge to shoot, that he tromps through one jungle after another, traverses miles and miles of desert, tops all mountain peaks time allows, and returns home with a hundred stuffed heads. The outdoorsman then writes a book about the tribes he has outraged, and gives lectures on the numerous sheiks with whom he has palavered."

"Sheiks! How utterly grand! And will he take me with him on his desert treeks?"

"Treks, my dear. Only if you insist."

"Oh I shall! How grand it shall be! Won't it, Ur?"

Ursula Dolmon shook a packet of smokes from her big sleeve, lit up, and said, "Frankly, my dear, no. Wind, shifting sand, wild men. . . . I'll not likely forget sinking knee-deep in sand at the funeral of your dear mother, God rest her soul."

Tina bowed her beehive and her aluminum lips tapped out a quick prayer. Then she looked up and brightly said, "Was her death just awful?"

"Primitive rituals are always the worst. But I've told you all that a thousand times and I don't feel like mulling over it again." Ursula raised her voice and called, "I say, when is this person scheduled to get here?"

Mrs. Sheehan glanced at the little watch pinned to her dress and said, "Any minute. Oh my."

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"I can hardly wait!" Tina said. She breathed rapidly and her face attempted to exude a childlike eagerness from beneath its lacquer. Her eyes grew huge and achieved a glazed dazzlement, as if some minute, delicate part—her tummy, heart, or liver—were about to pop.

She sprang up and like a marvelous tin puppet suddenly finding itself alive with everyone watching, exclaimed: "He's coming!" Clasping her hands and pressing them to her cheek, she whispered, "The man I love is on the way." Louder: "Great outdoorsman and chum of sheiks! Hurrying to me, Tina Buell! Oh, what a marvelous moment, is it not?"

"Oh gracious," Mrs. Sheehan said.

"Tina!" Ursala Dolmon banged on the table with her fist. "Restraint!"

But Tina's emotions whirred on. She panted and throbbed, her eyes burning like warning lights on a dynamo whining higher and higher into the red zone.

Still louder Ursula bellowed: "Your exercise! At once!"

Tina stumbled to a chair, tightly crossed her legs, and digging her elbows into her hips, took a deep breath. Her eyeballs pulsed with each thump of her heart, and Mrs. Sheehan and Ursula Dolmon listened to the clickety buzz as Tina whispered backward from one hundred. This took a while: Tina faltered often, lost her place, and had to be prompted by the ladies. She gasped through the sixties, toiled down the forties, but was rather herself when she at last sank to the bottom of the numbers, with Mrs. Sheehan and Ursula Dolmon nodding on each stroke and chanting ". . . five, four, three, two—one!"

Tina saw me the instant I stepped from the creek but she didn't flinch: perhaps I was emerging from a little dream spun by her dizziness. She blinked—and I was still there. She spoke, and Mrs. Sheehan and Ursula Dolmon turned.

I waved my big hat and started up the lawn, passing the cart and the unconscious dogs. At the steps, I bowed.

Mrs. Sheehan's lips twitched and flittered, balancing an expression between alarm and delight. Ursula Dolmon grunted uncertainly, but her suspicions quickly rallied and I heard quite clearly their brassy little voices yelling *Beware! Beware!* Ursula Dolmon's brows tightened, her eyes grayed, and she gritted her lips: it would be combat with no quarter given, and it was evident her choice of weapons was meat axes: "Well. A fop. What do you want?"

Tina and Mrs. Sheehan were stunned by this rudeness.

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But they were even more startled when I dashed up the steps, seized Tina's hand, and put my mouth on it.

On their own the servants, who it seemed had earlier come to the windows to study Miss Tina's fit and had stayed on for my entrance, at that moment trotted out the tea things, and Mrs. Sheehan, Ursula Dolmon, and Tina Buell burst into speech, each on a different track: Ursula Dolmon reiterating her challenge, though somewhat less staunchly than before; Mrs. Sheehan expressing hopes that I hadn't difficulty finding Bogsedge, isolated as it happened to be; and dear little Tina. . . .

Fine and excessive though my earlier description is, still it fails to convey Tina's beauty and its slick skin. As I held her hand, breathing her perfume—Civet Murmur, or was it Primal Repast?—I saw cumulus clouds rolling in great bawdy tussles down the sky; I heard the dulcet slap of cards in the long game of solitaire Goodness plays with Evil; and as a simper glimmered on the lips of the Angel of Death, with a gold tooth smack in the middle, I smelled her breath, warm fruit and fish, as Tina smiled at me and said, "You're pretty."

"Child!" Mrs. Sheehan exclaimed. Then to me, "You must forgive her. She. . ."

"Sir," Ursula Dolmon said so loudly the teacups tottered in their saucers. "Are you prepared to present Tina Buell a decent prospect?"

"Gracious!" Mrs. Sheehan said. "We're so clumsy. Forgive us, dear sir. And especially forgive poor Ursula's bluntness. I hope you shan't. . . ."

"Shan't us no shan'ts, Clarinda Sheehan," Ursula Dolmon said. "I'll speak for myself and I'll speak uninterrupted." Ursula glared at her until Mrs. Sheehan bowed her head. "Now. Sir, let's hear your prospects."

I slipped into a chair beside Tina's, facing the ladies, and took out my cigar case. "With your permission." I snipped the end of a cheroot and lit it. Ursula Dolmon eyed every move with the avidity of a great mongoose. Mrs. Sheehan peeked up with an unctuous smile that urged me to feel right at home. And Tina! Pearls of spittle glistened in the corners of her mouth, stretched wide in a smile both enraptured and entrancing.

I uttered first a ring of smoke and the three of them watched it shakily rise, open, and become nothing; and then: "Hark! I believe I hear someone coming." They lifted their heads in that inevitable and instinctual way. "Do I hear a carriage rumbling across a wooden bridge. . . ?"

But silence lay on the afternoon like a cow.

"My mistake," I said. "Perhaps he's here already."

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Mrs. Sheehan peeped, "Oh my," and began blinking her eyes so rapidly surely all the difficulty, and everything else as well, took wings and flapped off. Ursula Dolmon's face thickened and clenched to the sourest of frowns. She nodded slowly and, leaning forward, closed in for the kill. And Tina gave a little gasp, for she and I saw what the ladies couldn't.

Behind them there appeared in the trees along the creek a dwarf—though thicker. Rather, a fellow squashed into himself, with the excesses bulging out everywhere, a very heavy dwarf, actually. But no—he seemed a dwarf merely because he stood in the shadows of the trees. As he came to the edge of the shade, Tina saw he was a regular-sized fellow. No again! He was a *large* fellow! And wearing a tweed suit and cap, with yellow gloves, and swinging a big shiny walking stick!

"But sir," Mrs. Sheehan said to me, "no one is coming. I mean. . . *You* are. I mean. . ."

"Fah!" Ursula Dolmon shook with wrath. "He's an imposter, Clarinda. A fop interloper! A snake in the grass!" She glared at me. "Tell us, my fine young fop, who are you if you're not who you're supposed to be."

"I don't understand that," I said quietly. "Who am I supposed to be?"

"Why, who you are, of course," Mrs. Sheehan said.

"Oh. You know who I am?"

"We thought we did," Mrs. Sheehan said, while Ursula Dolmon grumbled, "Fah! Oh bloody fah!"

"And who might that be?" I said.

Mrs. Sheehan tried to speak but all her breath was gone. She sat with her eyes closed and her mouth open.

And it was left to Ursula Dolmon to say: "Hugh Venolio."

It undulated across the terrace and rippled down the lawn, echoing within itself as it does even when it is whispered, causing those who hear, no matter how often they have heard it before, to repeat it to themselves, as in fact the four of us were doing at that moment, murmuring *Venolio, Venolio. . .*

Though Tina uttered it louder than the rest of us. And with great urgency as her eyes went like darts to the face of the figure who upon hearing the purple smoke of that name stepped into the sunlight. Tina's next sound, another little gasp, had less delight than her first. And that was followed by as sincere a groan as ever was heard. Suddenly banging both plastic "platforms" on the terrace and leaning forward, rattling her beehive, Tina shot forth a piping, inchoate utterance, pathetic, desperate, and fierce. The ladies, densely preoccu-

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pied with their own matters, were oblivious to this display. But I recognized in Tina's outcry a word which Venolio himself no doubt could distinguish, but which the ladies mistook for "Noes," that is, Tina's naive disapproval of the ladies' confronting me in this way, expressed in terms of not just one "No," but many of them!

And as that shriek pierced the afternoon, the figure spun about as if suddenly remembering something he left among the trees, or as if he hoped to undo this, to turn back and, reentering, slip under the skin of the moment: miraculously remaining unnoticed, he would again come up the lawn, perhaps this time walking sideways, it might help, cross the terrace, and sit at the table. He would even light one of my cigars. Then, leaning forward, he would say in the suavest tone imaginable, "Venolio at your service."

Of course all was forgiven when I confessed not to being Venolio and apologized for the confusion I had inadvertently created by seeming to be what I wasn't, and I moreover was asked to dinner when I let it slip that I had once heard a certain Venolio mentioned, though I was regrettably foggy as to when, where, and the circumstances. I was, however, positive that those circumstances were special, if not indeed peculiar. Needless to say, these circumstances were of colossal significance to Mrs. Sheehan and Ursula Dolmon who immediately set forth the premise that while sojourning in foreign lands I had actually encountered Venolio face to face, quite without knowing it was he—"Stranger things have happened," Mrs. Sheehan was quick to point out—and, furthermore, perhaps the right remark or odd nuance would wisk the fog from my memory. I conceded this wasn't an altogether ironclad impossibility, and I thrilled the ladies by agreeing I just might even recognize this Venolio were I to lay eyes on him again. . .

At that, Mrs. Sheehan sent a servant galloping from the room. He returned with a folder of material Mrs. Sheehan had collected in her correspondence with Venolio's agent, one Cooper Goggins. "Perhaps you know him. . . ?" Mrs. Sheehan ventured, but Ursula Dolmon cut her off—"Ridiculous! That's too much to hope for." Mrs. Sheehan opened the folder and carefully laid before me a snapshot.

Hugh Venolio in safari costume kneels beside an elephant. One looks first into the eyes of the beast, vapid in death, then at the rifle across the hunter's knee and pointed by cruel coincidence at one of those eyes. Then one looks at the hunter himself. But his face is turned away as he leans toward the beast as if he is about to touch one of its vast ears. But one hardly minds not seeing the man's face; one's eyes are

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drawn again to the elephant's face and on second glance the eyes seem less dead. Could it be the elephant isn't dead but in a swoon? Venolio, strolling a forest path, has come upon an elephant lying in the dust. And he kneels to slip into its ear the lilting echo which will surprise and please the beast, curiously encourage it, and send it on its way. But not yet: in our moment the elephant gazes abjectly down the length of its famous but melancholy proboscis sprawling before Venolio.

In another snap Venolio faces the camera! However, all but his eyes are covered by a parka's mask, for here the outdoorsman floats on the severe and dimensionless white of the Arctic, one arm around the neck of a propped-up walrus who stares bluntly into the camera, conveying an uncommon levelness about things, including death, and a candor certainly exceeding our own as we pry the coarse canvas of Venolio's parka, searching for some hint of the hidden face.

"Just these two?" I said.

As Mrs. Sheehan slid them back into the folder, Ursula Dolmon answered: "She asked for more, but these are all Goggins would send."

"And he stopped answering my letters," Mrs. Sheehan said.

"But you persisted?" I said.

She sighed. "It's like writing to the moon."

"Then what led you to believe Hugh Venolio would come to present himself today?"

Ursula Dolmon unrolled a scroll of thick yellow paper; hiding within the filigrees and flourishes of a grandiose hand was an epistle agreeing to terms set forth in Mrs. Sheehan's of Five October, and guaranteeing that "Mr. V." would appear for tea at Bogsedge on One April for further negotiations, contractualizations and finalizings with Tina Buell.

"So you see why the child's heart is broken," Mrs. Sheehan said. "Her day has come and gone." Tina had been carried upstairs, quaking and hacking, after the episode on the terrace. When Mrs. Sheehan last peeked in at her, Tina was whining in her sleep, poor thing, and thrashing her legs as if she were riding a bicycle across the ceiling.

"It is my judgment," I said, returning the letter to Mrs. Sheehan, "that this matter requires the greatest caution."

"Oh my," she whispered. She looked at her friend and said, "Caution, Ursula."

"I advise you to prepare your defenses," I said, "while at the same time keeping open your ports."

Ursula frowned. "That seems to proceed on the assumption that Venolio still might come."

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I said in the dryest, most measured of tones, "It is of course merely a theory based on the impression we can piece together of your Venolio's modus operandi. Above all, he is unpredictable. One might go so far as to say he strives to be unknowable. But I have a hunch he'll come. It's a long shot"—I leaned forward, winked, and whispered, "but I'd bet my skin on it."

"Then you must stay!" Ursula said.

"Yes! You must!" Mrs. Sheehan said.

"Venolio has his Cooper Goggins," Ursula said.

"And we need one too," Mrs. Sheehan said. "Oh, *do* stay. I'll pay you handsomely."

I leaned back, my hand to my chin. "Frankly, I had other plans." Their faces crumbled. "I was on holiday, you know. Hiking the heath. However . . ." Their eyes brightened. "Your situation is intriguing. You might say it has me trapped." I laughed ironically. "All right. I agree to serve as your adviser."

"Hurrah!"

"On one condition."

"Anything!"

"Tina Buell's welfare must be placed entirely in my hands."

Without hesitating they agreed; after all, this was what they were asking for, wasn't it?

We shook on it and, with toddies, toasted Tina's future. Then with that crafty bravado for which counselors and ministers of war are famous, I lifted my goblet to the window and the night beyond: "To Venolio!" They stiffened, but then drank, peering intently at me over the rims of their cups.

"Do tell me again about Tibet!" Tina said.

"There, child," Ursula Dolmon said, dozing by the fire. Mrs. Sheehan looked up from her sewing. "You mustn't tire Mr. Green. You've been at him all day."

"I'm not tiring him," Tina said. "Am I, Vance?"

I smiled into her waxed face, squarely framed with bangs and straight black hair: she had been Asiatic this evening.

"Always gets her way," Ursula sighed. Mrs. Sheehan returned to her stitches.

"Oh please," Tina said. "Travel widens, you know."

I obliged by repeating what Tina and the ladies had already heard several times that day: A Season on Top of the World, beginning with

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an account of simple pleasures of the mountain village: riding the yak, eating the Sherpas' famous brown cheese pie, and a reminiscence of the yogi who stopped his heart each afternoon from three to three-fifteen; and featuring An Assault on K2: bizarre misadventures; hallucinations unique to the Himalayas; intimations on the pathos of reversion; and mysticism, the rustic's mainstay.

As Ursula Dolmon and Mrs. Sheehan sank away, Tina tiptoed to the sofa and sat beside me. Her expression inscrutable, she whispered, "Tell me about the chicks."

I smiled.

"Are they cute?"

"Moderately."

"Are they fat or skinny?"

"They're so bundled up, it's hard to actually see them. But as a rule they're nicely plump."

"Oh, 'nicely.' So you like that, do you?"

"Do *I*? Yes, in a way."

She squinted for greater inscrutability and said, "And in what way do you like them which aren't plump?"

"Anyone you have in mind particularly?"

"Me, dummy!"

"Oh. Well yes, I'd say you're a rather nice little thing."

"*Little* thing!" she squealed most scrutably, and woke the ladies.

"But of course if you give the yak its head, it will go right to the edge, for they love to look out into the sky. One wonders what they're thinking. . ." Ursula Dolmon and Mrs. Sheehan settled back.

"All right, you," Tina whispered, scooting closer. "What kind of 'little thing' am I?"

"Well . . . a peach. A ripe peach."

She closed her eyes. "Umm. I like that. Yes, I like that a lot. And am I sweet or tart?"

I sneaked a yawn. "Both at once."

"And do you nibble me or fill your mouth all at once and gobble me up?"

"Nibbles first, then to gobbling."

"Oh yes," and she opened her eyes—and looked not at me but over my shoulder, her eyes widening.

As I turned, a blur slid across the window, leaving after it the moon-gray night on the lawn.

"That was nothing," I said. "Your imagination. Or perhaps a very large owl."

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"It was him," she whispered and an amazing thing then happened: her expression fell vacant, completely, and showing through her Asian mask I saw the structure of her skull and, hovering therein, her redoubtable ancestry, as dour and undeniable as stones and ancient trees. Astounding! Though Tina Buell had absolutely no awareness of it, this gel which she considered her "face," no matter whose it was from one day to the next, was fixed to a frame of hard old wood.

"You promised me he would never come back," Tina said—for earlier I had told her, whispering behind the ladies' backs, that I had seen the distressing person who had appeared from the creek yesterday, and told him to go away forever, and that he had forthwith gone away. "You lied to me!"—and she socked me in the jaw!

I jumped to my feet with a yelp which woke the ladies. Seeing me standing, they struggled to their feet. "Bedtime," Ursula said and yawned like a lion.

"Come along, Tina," Mrs. Sheehan said. "Tell Mr. Green good night. There'll be more lectures tomorrow."

As they ushered her out, she didn't say good night but looked back with the same plain, wonderfully artless face which stared at me all night from the reflection on the window, drawing me into that blackness, deeper and deeper, until by dawn when I saw through again to the gray world and the heath, I was exhausted, weak with love and the foolishness of need. Lying on the bottom step, I convinced myself that in a few hours she would clomp down the stairs, little Heidi the milkmaid. Or fanfared by imaginary clarions she would come down in the sweeping gown and modest bonnet of Maid Marian. Or best of all she would be bound in the impenetrable black of Sister Mary Theresa, her face trussed and tiny as a daisy screwed into a rock.

"Hi, buster."

I lifted my head and, looking up a hundred miles to where she stood at the head of the stairs, I groaned. Her mouth glistened like a wound, as incredibly red as her hair, and she wore a silver dress so tight that as she came down the stairs every line of her body, every muscle, gleamed like salamanders swimming in mercury. "Hows about a picnic, big boy?"

And she was serious about the picnic, though Mrs. Sheehan showed her the sky, which had turned grayish green, and tried to convince her it would rain at any moment. But our pixie Rita Hayworth prevailed, and while the ladies sat on the terrace in caps and

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slickers with umbrellas at the ready, I spread a blanket on the lawn. Tina ate a deviled egg and smoked a cigarette. "Move."

She nodded to the side. "There." I sat between her and the terrace. "Now." Widely and redly she smiled from the 1940s, a smile of lilting sorrow which back then had something to do with the war but which now poured cruelty and courage into the same cup, inviting all comers while at the same time denying any chance of love. "You're going to tell me everything."

"Everything?"

"You know what I mean."

I took one of her cigarettes, lit it, and with my hand shaking, though I don't think she noticed, I said as suavely as I could, sounding I daresay quite a lot like Charles Boyer, "Maabe I do, on maabe I don't."

"Okay. I'll level." She leaned forward and put her hand on my knee. "I know why you're here."

"Ah." I smiled drolly. "On do you plan to . . ." I nodded toward the terrace, "tell them?"

She opened her mouth as wide as she could and laughed. She turned, her hand still on my knee but not visible from the terrace, and raising her voice to bright girlishness, she called, "We're having such fun!"

"That's nice, dear," Ursula Dolmon called.

She turned back to me. "Don't worry, honey. If I told on you, what good would it do me? It would be a Phallic victory."

"Pyrrhic victory."

She lit another cigarette. "At first I thought you were just after money. . ."

"Ah. Le spondulicks. . ."

"But it's bigger than that, isn't it?"

I couldn't play back to this. I felt everything going out of me.

"And it's *worse* than that." She laughed silently. "Isn't it?"

I forced a dry chuckle. But there was no Boyer left. There was nothing left. Somehow she *knew*.

"So," she said smugly. "You can tell me."

"But I thought you knew," I said quickly, grasping at straws.

"I do. But not the full particulars, silly boy. You can go ahead and tell me, I'll not stop what you're up to. For you see"—she worked the cigarette into her lips without opening them. She inhaled deeply and, flaring her nostrils, breathed out the smoke—"I'm all for it."

I looked away. "You weren't last night."

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She laughed. "That doesn't count. That wasn't *me*."

"Too bad. I rather. . ." My voice failed. I whispered, "I rather liked her."

"*You* would," she said.

I groaned.

"See!" She laughed in my face. "I understand!"

At that moment the sky broke and rain poured down. Tina jumped to her feet, hiked up her dress, and ran for the house. "What has he told you?" I called. I ran after her. "What has he told you about me?" She laughed over her shoulder, though I couldn't hear her voice for the rain, the wind, the thunder lumbering across the heath and up the lawn.

Ursula Dolmon held the door open for us and for that slithering rustle which follows people in from the rain. Ursula lit a lamp, but Tina, who had run upstairs and returned with her hair gray and pinned tightly to her head, and wearing one of Mrs. Sheehan's dresses, long-sleeved, dull purplish-brown like wood, the proper dress for sitting through dark afternoons, went straight over and turned out the lamp.

"But my dear. . ." Mrs. Sheehan started.

"No." In the overprecise manner of the maiden lady who must through the brambles each moment presents somehow pass without snagging her dress, pricking herself, and above all without screaming, Tina said, "If there's a lamp, all we can see is ourselves. I want to watch the storm."

She sat down, feet and knees together, her hands on her lap, no doubt picking at the wan little violets she herself had sewn onto a handkerchief.

Shivering in my wet clothes, I sat in silence. I could hurry up to my room and change, but I was afraid to leave the room for one moment. I watched her. In the darkness she seemed to narrow, shrink into herself as if right before my eyes she were shriveling. I blinked, and she was again herself, or at least what I could see of her.

I crossed the room with excessive and unintended slowness to the lamp. I discovered my matches were wet. Of course. I turned to ask Ursula Dolmon for hers.

Ursula Dolmon and Mrs. Sheehan sat in the darkness of their chairs like sphinxes sinking back into the sand. Tina sat bent forward like a dark *C*, a doll frazzled and funked by too much rough play. "It's time." I went to the French doors. Thunder journeyed across the sky, shaking the glass. Hugh Venolio crossed the sky in the yellow cone of

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light from the lamp he had lit in the room, reflected in the dark pane and obliterating the world.

He put his arm around my shoulders and said in his tight, odd voice which always reminded me of an oboe, "Who are you?"

"Oh cut that out."

"I mean are you Cooper Goggins, Vance Green, Jimmy McJames. . .?"

"Vance Green."

"Ah. My favorite."

I whispered, "You should have waited. We had a chance for something better. If you had only waited."

"There, there," he said. I was crying. Nuzzling me with his great proboscis, he breathed in my ear, befuddling me, spinning everything until it came unnoticed and slid off, and while his bright eyes stared down his nose, I found myself alone on a street, narrow and endless, the sounds of the city cupped by the sky and muffled to an ethery *wah wah wah*. In my hand was a card: *Miss Sondra Padilla*, and the address was the place across the street. A face, small and vague, was stuck in a window on the second floor. I took off my hat and waved it.

"Be good," Venolio murmured and with a shove sent me forth.

But I turned to them and said, "What do you think of your outdoorsman now?"

Mrs. Sheehan and Ursula Dolmon stared right through me! But Tina crooked her finger. I went to her and leaned down. She whispered, "Hugh tells me you must be off for an appointment with a certain Miss. . .Pudolla?"

"No," I said. Venolio coughed peremptorily behind me. "There's plenty of time," I said, glancing at him. He stood with his hands clasped behind him and leaning slightly forward like a banker pondering loans, foreclosures, evictions. "I am still their guest," I whispered.

Walking by me, and mumbling what was either "Rather" or "Blather," he went to a sideboard and poured a drink.

"Dear Mr. Venolio," Mrs. Sheehan said in a lutey tremolo. "I do hope you will favor us with one of your songs."

"He sings?" I exclaimed. "He has told you he *sings*?"

Venolio bowed his head modestly. He downed his drink, dabbed his lips with a blue silk handkerchief, and strode to the center of the triangle formed by the ladies' chairs. He tooted a pitch pipe and, lifting

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his great nose as if sniffing the note as it hung in the air, launched into a blasting rendition of "I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls."

Mrs. Sheehan clasped her hands ecstatically and at the sadder parts hid her face with a hankie and whined. Ursula Dolmon closed her eyes and nodded in full agreement with every note and sentiment; she even hummed along loudly, which didn't in the least bother Venolio. The third lady nodded her head and for a while patted the arm of her chair roughly in time with Venolio's music, until this tired her out; then leaning back, her mouth open like a dark hole, she breathed loudly and unevenly.

When Venolio finished the song, they applauded at length and he bowed a dozen times. It didn't take much coaxing to get another song from him.

"Wait!" I said. "Listen! I. . ."

Venolio launched into "Captain Hornsby's Ride":

> Oh the cruel and wintry vigils keep the soldiery heart aloof,
> Hey nonny ru, ta-rah, ta-rah,
> Till the dauntless lads salute the dawn and then fall off the roof,
> With a waldy way, a waldy woe, a waldy waldy wall.

I stumbled from one of them to the other, tugging at their sleeves, putting my face in theirs, calling in to them. I knocked Ursula in the shoulder but couldn't get her attention. I jumped up on the arm of Tina's chair, climbed onto the back of the chair as if I were crossing a stile from one field to another.

Venolio finished his song and began another. I collapsed on the carpet but watched every move until they broke for lunch.

From the kitchen I went into the dining room with my pockets stuffed with carrots, celery, and radishes. I ate standing behind them at the table. "I can't begin to tell you how pleased I am, Mr. Venolio," Mrs. Sheehan said, "that my niece has found such a gentleman."

Venolio, picking his teeth with the prong of a fork, mumbled, "My pleasure," looking across at Tina who had once again assumed her beehive, pink dolly dress, and green hose.

When they finished, Venolio scooted back Tina's chair for her, and as she rose, nudged the back of her head with his nose.

As they processioned into the parlor I threw radishes, popping them off Venolio's head; they bounced helter-skelter and Mrs. Sheehan almost tripped on one.

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"Do tell us of travailing in Tibet," Tina said.

"Traveling, dear," Ursula said.

"Above all," Venolio said, "I am an outdoorsman. My heart is always in it, no matter where I am. So Tibet was inevitably the place for me. Just as"—he thumped down on his knees before Tina and took her hand in his—"it was inevitable that I should pluck this prize and take her for my own."

I ran up and jumped on his back. I hoped to send him down face first to the floor and pummel his head, bash it in if I could—and if I couldn't, I would try to steer him down the lawn and into the creek. I pictured myself straddling his neck and holding his head as we sank into the depths.

But when I leaped onto him, he merely hunched slightly and didn't miss a beat of his spiel. As he stood, I climbed onto his shoulders.

Now Venolio was gibbering in Tibetan. He did a little jig from the hills, knocking my head on the ceiling. Then he taught the ladies a Sherpa nursery rhyme:

Hup toppa yurka
Puka pow, puka pow.

Which he translated If you're good, when the yak dies we'll eat him, eat him. Venolio then had them dancing with him in a circle. When they sat panting, I climbed off his shoulders.

On the terrace rain dripped from the eaves, but the storm was over. Ursula's dogs came running across the lawn and skidded on the wet marble, surprised to find me out here, their big ears pricking, their eyes round and questioning. "It's all right," I said. I glanced into the parlor: he had brought out a Maori game, and they were chasing him with feathers and bones.

We found the cart. Ecstatic, they faunched and gamboled and I could hardly get them in the traces. I checked and still had the address card, and with a click of my tongue we were off.

It was slow going, across the lawn, but at the bridge we took to the road and made excellent time. They fairly flew, their ears down, their long bodies stretching into the smooth rhythm that promises eternity.

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Marcus Raskin

FUTURAMA

> I want to be a *luftmensch*—a *luftmensch* is someone who lives on air, rises and has kicks in an intellectual way. This is the way Jews used to get high. This is what makes things exciting. For many years of my life, I have been involved with the Academy and teaching courses, now here is a chance to be a *luftmensch*, to rise high and now you tell me I have to be an anchor, a balast (sic) to drag along. I don't want to do that for a while. I want the members of the Commission to be *luftmensch*.

Governments, corporations and social scientists believe that control of the future can be accomplished by developing techniques of analysis and action which assert power over the ways people act. Such power can be asserted through classic means such as persuasion, terror, manipulation, bribery, magic or scientific inquiry.

But since the Second World War a new mode of control over the future has been developed. Its methods are epistemological handmaidens to the standard techniques—short-term policy planning, quantitative projections, scenarios, decision theory and simulation. These new methods intend to show how people will act and interact in a future problem situation with the situation structured like a military battle in which enemies and friends play out their assigned parts.

Those who intend to control the future generally share certain epistemological and behavioral assumptions. The first, and perhaps the most obvious, is the belief that it is in fact possible for man to control the future and the world's resources—that he is not bound by province of God or natural determinism. The future is open, to be shaped by Faustian man. In a capitalist system the futurological assumption is that the social and economic system will be shaped by a technocratic elite of social scientists and planners who will develop the "right" kinds of social institutions as well as the force to maintain them.

Karl Mannheim has noted that:

> . . .even the most radical democrat will admit today that in a world in which the work of government requires increasingly specialized

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> technical knowledge and in which the most important matters are settled by commissions and not by the deliberations of general parliamentary assemblies, adequate control cannot depend on general approval and thorough-going publicity. Exactly the same holds true for the various spheres of cultural life, which in the main require such a refined special knowledge that irresponsible chatter has neither controlling nor guiding value. It is very probable that a planned society will provide certain forms of closed social groups similar to our clubs, advisory councils, or even sects, in which absolutely free discussion may take place without being exposed to premature and unsatisfactory criticism by the broader public.

Apart from the secret and elitist presumptions of those who wish to control the future, there are other beliefs shared by colonizers of the future. They believe that there is a discernible, causal, nondialectical relationship between individual human actions and the probable responses to those actions. Hence, it is unnecessary to explain or understand people in psychological or aesthetic terms since it is assumed that they operate only as objects and interchangeable units within organizations. Futurology and planning encourage the development of knowledge and facts so that prediction will result in consequential behavior. Thus, when futurologists attach themselves to corporate institutions (business, government and military) their predictive analyses are intended to have practical consequences. To ensure the proof of the prediction, the social organization is then arranged in such a manner as to fulfill the predictive prophecy. We are assured that the best we can hope for is finding means to manipulate the social structure so as to avoid extremes. People, things and structures are objects in problem solving. People live what might be called "lived lives" and therefore it is unnecessary to consider a moral component since we have no chance to exercise any moral judgment. By the nature of society, we are not free and each choice is a tragically ambiguous one to be made by elites.

Some people believe that there is both a soothsaying and a harsh prophetic quality to futurology. The art of soothsaying has always been important to the psychology of any palace court and in Washington, fortune-telling conducted by palmists and soothsayers is a flourishing business. However, the prophetic aspect of futurology, the warning that God will punish man for his injustices if he does not repent and reform, has long since been cancelled out. Moreover, the derivation of the term itself does not seem to suggest stern moral exhortation. The term "futurology" was coined at the end of the second world war by Asop Flechtheim, who, like Mannheim, intended

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it to evoke an updated version of the principles of positivism and the Enlightenment.

According to Flechtheim, the futurological approach was an attempt to discuss the evolution of man and his society in the future tense, which he maintained had been forbidden until our time. "I held that by marshalling the ever-growing resources of science and scholarship," he recalled, "we could do more than employ retrospective analysis and hypothetical deduction. We would try to establish a degree of credibility and probability of forecast." Flechtheim's presuppositions and goals are now shared by both state socialists and American pragmatists. But each of these groups interprets futurology in its own way.

In a capitalist state, futurology is predicated on a strain of deformed Hegelianism. The assumption of this pseudo-Hegelianism is that antagonistic classes exist—each with its own consciousness—but that they are welded together, and finally mediated, by bureaucratic rationalizing and a state decision-making structure. Government officials, mandarin advisors and universities have a supremely important role in the rationalizing process: it is up to them to find a way to ameliorate class tensions by defining a unifying purpose which can be internalized by all the classes.

Along these lines, Daniel Bell and his colleagues on the Commission 2000 assumed that their ideology and spirit would become the ruling consciousness of American society and that their mandarin technocratic class would share power with the capitalists and military. The Commission on the Year 2000 hoped to spread the goods and services enjoyed by the upper classes throughout the entire society. This was to be accomplished without class struggle or economic redistribution. It was to "come about" through technological magic practiced at the universities and implemented through the corporate industrial automation process. Bell's viewpoint was the intellectual culmination of assumptions embodied in the corporate and welfare state initiated during the New Deal.

Intellectuals whose task has been to develop the "music" for great institutions and great crusades have accompanied their deformed Hegelianism with a reliance on unconnected empirical facts. Huntington Cairns, for example, a philosopher who was an advisor to the Mellon family, maintained in an article entitled "Sociology and the Social Sciences" that "Sociology has been, and is today, a descriptive science. That is to say, it is nonexplanatory and its propositions are of equal rank logically, and do not serve as bases for one another. It is a science based directly on detached facts untied by universal hypothesis

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. . . and, as Aristotle observed long ago, might just as well have been otherwise." In futurology, moreover, positivist principles have been attenuated in three ways. First, the empirical social fact is utilized in the way facts are supposedly used in the natural sciences: the only *datum* is the *res extensa*—that which can be empirically observed—and as a result potentiality and consciousness are excluded from consideration. Second, quantitative methods of the social sciences take precedence over other methods of analysis and evaluation. As Robert Merton and Daniel Lerner declared in 1951: "We do not take into account 'personal' motivations, such as love of truth or an appetite for knowledge, since there do not exist valid data on this matter and since it is practically impossible to assign to them today even an approximate place on a calibrated scale of national distribution." Third, it is assumed that the instrumental needs of different classes and individuals are to be fulfilled by a spirit which exists beyond the ordinary cares and obvious manipulations of the most powerful forces of the society. At the beginning of this century, John Dewey and James Tufts asserted that:

> From the ethical point of view . . . , it is not too much to say that the democratic ideal *poses* rather than solves the great problem: how to harmonize the development of each individual with the maintenance of a social state in which the activities of one will contribute to the good of all the others. It expresses a postulate in the sense of a demand to be realized: that each individual shall have the opportunity for release, expression, fulfillment, of his distinctive capacities, and that the outcome shall further the establishment of a fund of shared values.

These ideas were put into practice at the end of the second world war by the American pragmatists who invented the "policy sciences." It was the intention of the policy sciences, the methods of which were technocratic and apparently neutral, to avoid the question of whether social science had its own interests, class bias or hidden agenda of political practice. According to Harold Lasswell, the policy sciences could speak for everyone. Their technocratic mode would start as the "dominant current among many scholars and scientists notably in the social sciences" and then move "more specifically toward the policy sciences of democracy." Hence, it would appear that what Marxism was supposed to be to the socialist state, the policy sciences would be to democracy.

Planning was the staple of policy making. According to Charles Rothwell, planning was a "systematic attempt to shape the future.

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When such planning becomes a prelude to action, it is policy making. For policy, broadly speaking, is a body of principles to guide action." It is a calculated choice intended to (1) clarify goals; (2) develop means to choose between "options"; (3) estimate in some quantitative way the probable consequences of alternative directions; and (4) determine the "optimum means for carrying out the action decided upon." This mode of thought spoke to a whole generation of technocrats who lived in one reality and spent their days planning another one—either for themselves or for others. They believed in problem-solving, which came to mean the application of instrumental rationality to particular situations; and these particular situations which totalized people's lives, so that there was finally no escape from large processes thought to be under rational control.

Max Horkheimer maintained:

> Just as all life tends today increasingly to be subjected to rationalization and planning, so the life of each individual including his most hidden impulses, which formerly constituted his private domain, must now take the demands of rationalization and planning into account: the individual's self-preservation presupposes his adjustment to the requirements for the preservation of the system. And just as the process of rationalization is no longer the result of the anonymous forces of the market, but is decided in the consciousness of a planning minority, so the mass of subjects must deliberately adjust themselves. The subject must, so to speak, devote all his energies to being 'in and of the movement of things.'

The historical precursors of the policy planners and futurologists were gentle and serious men. They were not *danse macabrists* like Herman Kahn who enjoyed titillating audiences by telling them about the need for nuclear weapons and then clucking about the horrible consequences of such weapons. Indeed, social science meant something quite different to earlier pragmatists who, as children of the Enlightenment, believed that the control of nature through knowledge was an effective means of achieving human salvation. Unfortunately, very few such thinkers understood that the domination of nature—as an ideology and practice—would also have to mean the domination of man. The slow, the "primitive," the communal and tactile, those populations which saw their culture as part of nature would have to give up their animism in favor of the totemic rationality of the modern world.*

*One group, the Thomists, saw the question in a different light: they argued that it was a mistake to see man and nature as infinitely pliable and manipulable, as most Marxists have done. Believing in natural law, they sought to determine the essence of

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There were no higher cultural or historical standards to which an appeal could be made.

In our own time, the intellectual worker—whether in the government, the corporate world or the military—has been debased into constructing "as if" worlds and using them as prescriptions for colonizing institutions. In the "as if" world the work of the intellectual worker, Daniel Bell's *luftmensch,* is reduced to contingency planning for tactical nuclear wars in Europe, to offering eight alternative world visions or to forecasting the number of cars GM can sell in the year 2000. In the "as if" world there is no human history; there is no existential or cultural meaning to the past. There is a radical elimination of history and the substitution of a history of the future.

"As if" bureaucracies have a task beyond self-preservation and status acquisition: they must predict and control the future, and must also find a way to routinize the Fuastian spirit. While living comfortable but alienated lives. The Faustian bureaucrats and futurologists have come to view life as a series of conflicts which they can overcome with slide rules, military force and admonitions about the proper rate of growth. They come to believe that their plans—antiseptic but rational in a calculative sense—can be accomplished through the hierarchy of existing power. They believe, like good Weberian bureaucrats, that they will not have to get involved in politics—in any system of exchanges—or have to take any of the existential risks which confront political people. For them there is no sense of personal despair.

The Faustian "as if" world is supposedly more predictable than the real one. People's ways of behaving are classified in ways which are quantitatively measurable. Such measurements are invariably one-dimensional projections of frozen facts. They are arrived at by calculation or through fantasies (scenarios). However, neither the fantasy scenarios nor the facts adduced from social channelization relate to or describe the underlying reality of human behavior. Thus, "as if" forecasting is hobbled because it is based on observed behavioral phenomena which reveal nothing about the inner lives of people. It only describes behavior to which people are reduced—or which they

man—as individual and as part of a group. It should be noted that this point of view, which begins with an inverted assumption, has enormous and beneficial consequences. Accepted by natural rights thinkers and structuralists alike, this position assumes that there are inherent boundaries and limits, and that to breach them is to destroy the limitations placed on actions against nature and the human other. In the absence of such limits nature and man might be so changed that nature would take on the aspect of hell and man's institutions would become forms of beastliness.

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are induced—to follow. By ignoring all the anthropological and philosophical knowledge of history, law and therapeutic psychology, the planners reduce a person to his behavior in isolation and make no judgments about major social facts and organizations which affect the situations in which he may find himself. There is no interest in the fact that the draftee in the Indo-China war is not in the jungle by his choice, or that the decisions of the Open Market Committee of the Federal Reserve System—which controls the money supply—do not represent the thinking of workers.

By planning for the future on the basis of the existing social organization—its class structure, its colonizing technology, and its self-protecting knowledge—we are robbing people of a future outside of faulty superstructures. We are robbing them, as well, of their potentiality, requiring them to continue to define themselves through the things which exist around them: the consumer goods, the police, the military and the banking system. The faulty social system is not seen as the problematic. Rather, it is the people who must internalize the idea that they are problematic, and so they come to see themselves as the potentially guilty ones who are to be sacrificed or used.

Our artists have long understood the emptiness and desperation of state and corporate planning. The great novels of dystopia, *1984* and *Brave New World,* started from a fundamental insight. These books asserted that planning for the future through organizational and hierarchical means (the State, the Party or the Corporation) without the assistance of a moral science in fact destroyed truth and justice—those very impulses which gave impetus to the cultural and political revolutions of the twentieth century. Orwell and Huxley damned power and rationalization. They showed the reader the one-dimensionality of bourgeois and state socialism which smothered man's internal and external space. Children of the very class which had committed itself to merely observable behavior, Orwell and Huxley concluded that all of modern life was nothing more than surface phenomena. They seemed to be saying that bureaucratic planners, the advocates of scientism, did not understand man's internal life, that life in which moral truths have their effect and the spirit of justice are formed.

On the eve of the Second World War, Archibald MacLeish wrote that it was only the poet who could help us to understand and transform the future:

> The economist . . . cannot help us. Mathematicians of the mob, their function is to tell us what, as a mob, we have done. . . . When they try

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> to build their theories out beyond the past, ahead of history, they will build like wasps with paper. And for this reason: their laws come after, not before, the act of human wishing, and the human wish to live in and make true. For what is lacking in the crises of our times is only this: the image. Its absence is the crisis. It is the act of the spirit which fails in us. With no means or with very few, men who could imagine a common good have created great civilizations. With every means, with every wealth, men who are incapable of imagining a common good create ruin. This failure of the spirit is a failure from which only poetry can deliver us.

Beyond being a craftsman who makes the furniture of our senses and our minds, the artist also comprehends the inner life. It is in this realm that those who construct "as if" fantasies are so lacking. Even Plato, who in the *Republic* fails to understand the inner life except as an area of wishes to be repressed, is aware that the poet-artist achieves a public expression of the inner life.

The artist begins by asserting that truth is within us and beyond social systems. Art serves to express myths which are not time-bound but which repeat themselves in many guises in the history of man's culture, and through myth the basic existential truths about reality are revealed. On the other hand, modern love of calculative thinking has meant that we are not clear about what is real. As I have suggested, calculative thinking translates the qualities and substance of the world into numerical representations. But such representations serve as shields against understanding the things and processes themselves. Richard McKeon, in praising Thomas Mann, has claimed that it is the artist who comprehends the nature of those myths and truths which exist beneath numbers and calculations:

> . . . we have lost our sense with profundities of truth because we have confused truths with facts that we can see and test by their utility, and we have come to suspect the myth, because we suppose literal mindedly that, unlike history, the myth did not happen and therefore is not true.

We would be wrong to think of scenarios conjured at think tanks as myths which teach fundamental truths. While they usually deal with how leaders will act, scenarios do not set forth invariable principles of human nature. In contrast to artistic expressions, the planner's scenario is ripped out of time, place, tradition and psychology. It is deformed structuralism which assumes that—like money and numbers—countries and people are interchangeable. If a particular scenario prediction does not apply to France, it might apply to Italy. As

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Herman Kahn has said, the problems "might look very different from those abstract problems actually predicted for the hypothetical France of 1975 since both 'predictions,' the actual ones about France and the hypothetical ones by a non-existent supremely competent planner, are necessarily abstracted from reality." This insistence on interchangeability, on projecting elaborate schemes on the basis of information and ideas ripped out of their original context, universalizes ideas which by their nature should have only limited meaning or specific objectives. But their inventors refuse to recognize such limitations. Consequently, state bureaucracies revolve around permanent "threat situations" and defense is seen as a matter of "taking out" particular cities which need not be named. Accordingly, judgment about ideas is lost because ideas are severed from human passion.

The scenario is a misuse of man's impulse to imitate and act, because it defeats what art forms teach us: that there are unique human acts which cannot be explained through utilitarian language charts. Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* teaches us more about nuclear reality than Herman Kahn's book *On Thermonuclear War* because Kubrick depicts particular human needs and desires—the unique personhood beyond the social role. Kubrick's farce deals with passions and, as Bertrand Russell has said, it is human passion which defines the moral content of a person's actions. Imaginary ("as if") games are aimed at denying human passions. In this connection, Paul Goodman pointed out that bureaucracies develop format language to cover their activities:

> Format is Speech colonized, broken-spirited. It is a use of speech as social cement, but it is not like the small talk of acquaintances on the street in their spontaneous style; it is a collective style for a mass. . . . Diplomats, administrators of all kinds and other public relators, who have to make remarks about what is none of our business, have always used a style to drain meaning from what they say. . . . The government of a complicated modern society cannot lie much. But by format, even without trying, it can kill feeling, memory, learning, observation, imagination, logic, grammar, or any other faculty of free writing.

When we hear Henry Kissinger speak we witness a master of format language, a language as formalistic and empty as that found in proposals for government or foundation grants. This language is the nonreferential, untruthful code which allows men to develop insane systems of defense, education or economic development—systems which have lost touch with any human purpose.

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Roger Garaudy has suggested that it is time to reaffirm the rights of "Dionysus the dancer against Apollo the sculptor and artisan. Is not Zorba the Greek a saint for our time who shows us that there are crucial things that only dance can express?" To reject futurology and emphasize the importance of art as the true expression of human needs is not to say that art causes politics to vanish. Despite the claims of Lasswell, who hoped that policy sciences would be beyond politics, and the claims of the dogmatic Marxists who believe that scientific administration takes the place of politics once social classes disappear, it should be clear that both art and politics are man's natural condition.

Today we are involved in the historic effort to develop a politics of transformation. Such a politics requires a constant process, moving beyond assigned role or planner's model, and seeking to take each transitory moment and develop from it a sustained dynamic of radical reconstruction. Art, on the other hand, succeeds in being both timely in the political sense and timeless in the impulses which it expresses. It "outlives its own time and continues to live in harmony with the movement of real life itself," as Sanchez-Vazquez claims: ". . . Inasmuch as art is an affirmation, expression and objectification of man, understood in a concrete way as social and historical being, art sinks its roots in that profound and authentic vein of humanity, the people."

Gramsci's interpretation of art as the profound aspiration of a people in any particular historical period suggests that once we recognize unconquered art we can become aware of particular human aspirations, of a particular craving. This craving we may call the principle of negativity. People have begun to make it clear that stopping and then transforming the social institutions which attempt to colonize time and space, are now crucial political and human tasks. A reconstruction of this sort may be accomplished in many ways. Clearly, one of them is to reconsider the deal which Faust made with Mephistopheles regarding the relationship of knowledge and power. In less metaphorical terms, it is clear that the science of genetics, for example, is itself a study of limits, structures and essences. These are the issues from which we cannot escape.

The fashion today is to reopen the question of planning. Obviously, planning is merely the reflection of the balance of social forces at any one time. John Dewey had hoped for a different kind of planning than has emerged in the world. He pointed out that there was an immense difference between the planned society and the continuously planning society:

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> The former requires blueprints imposed from above and therefore involving reliance upon physical and psychological force to secure conformity to them. The latter means the release of intelligence through the widest form of cooperative give and take. The attempt to plan social organization without the freest possible play of intelligence contradicts the very idea in social planning. For the latter is an operative method of activity, not a predetermined set of final truths.

Perhaps if we could agree on a clear principle of negativity, and ethical limits, we would be able to see the outlines of the society struggling to be born.

We are saddened by the death of

Robert Lowell

a friend and contributor.

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POEMS

Virginia Campbell

GOOD MORNING

Imagine a small
but compassionate island.
Women, like gods in drag,
get up and mend the sails.
Gulls hang in the mist
like rags and boys cast
silver lures as the tide changes.
There are clouds above you,
pale amorphous breasts—
you'll fall into them maybe . . .
your arms are weightless
reaching into the waves,
they are lost peninsulas
harboring the last seconds
of something. Six . . .
five . . . three . . . the shadows
of abandoned butterflies
steal across the beach like tears.
A rain upon the skin;
a tiny wind in the ear.
The dunes whisper "give in,"
shifting like hair
across your body.
Now the air is thin
and now the horizon clears.
Blurs flutter over
the remnants of scenery—
over the sky-blue quilt
and the wavering ridges of your sheet.
And finally the light grows
too aggressive for your dream.
Your eyes open and fall
on the window, through the glass
and into the blinding prison of the trees.

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Ralph Angel

Falling behind, I was trying to hold on
to a stray branch stuck in the grass, a crowd of
bathrobes in a driveway, a missing gatepost
to alter the day, making it bearable. But as I drew closer
their difference loosely spread
through neutral streets, gray Autumn, the way
ground fog or sadness gathers this city—
cold around the edges seeping in like rain through sleep.

People go on. Countless footsteps
pass through car doors, wind up stairs and arrive
at far corners right on time. The victories there:
conversation. The calm strangers. The most available identity.
I couldn't know what doesn't change must be done
over and over again. I was thinking hard, chipping away
at my heart, unattaching a string of
birds from the wires, and disregarding them.
Each sound and nerve-end
gives in to the dull sirens supporting the distance,
sounds in a memory without the memory's story.
The sighing, indecisive breeze
accumulates in the grave that was opened the day I was born.

Fir trees wander through the afternoon.
I was catching up with myself. Here's the newspaper,
the packets of Kasseri and Feta.
There's the drugstore's clean tiles, the J & M cardroom,
the butcher's red flag. I was watching the woman
who snagged her sweater on the table.
I wanted to leave. I was already letting go.

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Martha Zweig

DIALECTIC

Worse is better. Better is better too.
All our motion and all theirs
rises against them.
Everything they try turns into revolution

like their bewildered troops
who perhaps pass twice
between the same two trees
and remember themselves,

and return identical
in disguise,
loving their guns
they hated: more of us.

Error arises for us to clarify.
Then there will be no error.
Even bad practice makes each of us
correct it to create equal skill.

We work perfectly in nature.
Nothing that is is wasted.
All scraps build
the beautiful possibilities:

We can use death.
We use our own
deaths. We use theirs.
Our love is all coming around.

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Leslie Wolf

UNDER THE RAINBOW

The old Chinese asleep beside the pond
cradling the curl of his daughter
breathes in the night air
that slides from the blade of the willow
and imagines her small waterbuffalo in the stars.
It is violated by Saturn, and departs
its black, speckled hill.
It moves to a new cog in the sky.
The child sleeps on. The father sleeps.
Frightful tornadoes of symmetry
flash and close in the cheekbones of Mars.

Cured in a turquoise windcradle
Uranus and Neptune
have a balmy oblivion to protect
from each other in the riveted calm.
The planets are three quarters out tonight.
A young American proposes to his first date
at the zenith of his first Ferris wheel.
Wrapped around the well
the flowering cherry hangs loose
in tan, forgiving skin.
The dark moon hides its one eye.
Venus what I do
in the name of your fleet
starry year . . .

Down past the upright pine and ruined willow
two moons of Jupiter weave a broken
friendship ring, half-sisters
of a large, unlucky time.
On the bank, the Chinaman awakens
to introduce his brother, new brother, to his son.

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O Beasts of Heaven—
Intergalactic flies!
On the scorched grains of Newport
what I wanted
was marriage without a wife,
can you picture?
Now a seabreeze threads the missing
carwindows, hear it?
There are ribbons of blood in the water.
And Pluto, left at the edge, so
wrinkled—saddest and last—
Pluto swallows Mercury
and calls it the Earth.

Robert Long

from THE SONNETS

22.

Wind dies trying bends. A
Harbor dented her sight.
Next hymn hauls a climbing kite
up through inner-rhyming herons.

All docile islanders
wend churning propellers,
seen dentists were violent,
else wheat hunts a file.

Naming: o, halo of flies . . .
nothing in the smelling salts,
nothing in the flivver boot.

All is doused, thrown out:
uncles and helicopters,
blooms and bushes.

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Two Poems by Jill Hoffman

NUDISTS

This anniversary of salt
we boiled out of an ocean of fire
for twelve years in a tub
as if we would not die if we did not die drowning
(and I smelled the fresh grass
in the pantries of air!)
has lain bare that you are thinking
of duty and I of
flies copulating in the pandemonium
on a beach that has known all kinds.

LATE AUGUST

Most cunning lover of herself whispering
into the boudoir of her ear

I lay you to rest in a dusty couch
and get me your sister

whose brown forehead is grooved with the tracks
of the patrolling jeep. The rocker flies off the porch:

her interrupted nights open the bureau drawers spewing smalls
in a corner, where her friend sits who is like a bride

in a canopy bed
watching the machinations of her mourners
fornicate on her tray, with the groom

who has the mien of a butler, carrying over his arm
waves in a blizzard

when, on the last morning, all the green girls wear veils.

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William Stafford

A FACE

It's just by chance, who
you are, but given myself
I take care of this being.
Nobody else will remember
its hunger, cold, loneliness:
I will be reminded, and care.

This face, like an old watch,
I carry wherever I go.
Grandmothers, grandfathers, you pictures,
you should forgive my regret,
my wanting another. I carry it
as you did. It belongs
somewhere, and I am taking it there.

On corners I let the wind
have all the world, and I turn
as a ship accepts the waves
but is itself and has a voyage
built into it, stubbornly.

The choice of being who you are
is offered us, or being nothing.
The mask of myself is an old gift
nobody else took. So I brought it here.

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Cheri Fein

#16 FOR DECEMBER

Somewhere where you're not used to crossing,
This street not North or South according to Map Central,
But the border
Where citizens

Rush around as if doing the Insect Dance,
As if one ant could carry more weight than two
So who needs to practice
With a partner the Shift & Balance Waltz. The mood is
Don't stop here, keep going. Going

You walk the wrong way for a block or two
Seeing a lot from here
Until the shopkeeper rolls down the metal gates
Cutting off light like a stage curtain; then it's scary
Suddenly scary to be standing in the dark
On a strange street with a broken street light.
No one knows how to cross. It's the Pause-
After You-Pause game that so easily leads to accidents.

It's time to be getting on. Amazingly,
You somehow find the way back to yourself. I'm so glad
Our paths crossed at the workshop. That was a wonderful
Summer because I have a way of forgetting important dates
And scenery and down there
There was nothing much to see,
Which way to go, whether these shoes are comfortable,
And whose aproned image will be standing at the door
When I get home. That's all I need from you today,
No more than this note:

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C: Keep on with your work which will eventually
Illuminate part of your face like indirect lighting
Or a terrible scar. You won't hear from me again
For some time. Here
On a scrap of paper is nothing you've ever seen before.
It won't help you in the least, not even to forget.

Judith Johnson Sherwin

HOW WE CHANGED

i didn't move. what else? another day. i thought of you. the iceberg. i was here.

i was here. i didn't move the iceberg. what else? i thought of you another day.

another day i was here. i thought of you. i didn't move. what else: the iceberg.

the iceberg, another day. what else: i was here. i didn't move. i thought of you.

i thought of you, the iceberg. i didn't move another day. i was here, what else?

what else: i thought of you. i was here, the iceberg. another day i didn't move.

move, what else? day: thought of you. the iceberg was here.

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Rose Lesniak

THE OAK TREE

There are nights, O Chicago
summer blows & you scream to leave
to be a cherry tree or blossom
to be a highway, sidewalk or bee.

They think you're always happening
changing colors bursting greens
then one day becoming another shape,
a rocking horse or chair.

You see each halo of arc lamp lights
yellow & turning to smoke
the chiming of bird notes
the same music repeated.

You know all the constellations
born under one but never see them much any more
you miss hearing the dance of heels & toes, heels & toes,
but never walk in early morning

on your wrists sparrows scream
a corpse wrapped you stand
arms extended to sun
it's burning

under your eyes
flies & mosquitos get along otherwise unnoticed,
about the moon you never forget
if you stare too long you're lost.

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Preferring the open veranda
watching streets outstretch to bodies,
you see a woman run in night gown
shouting aloud to the crickets,

And you're the same as her
reaching out from here
confined in a tapestry,
dying for a museum to enclose you.

David Bromwich

KICKAPOO WAR DANCE

Then autumn brought a slant of sunlight down
Compelling us to our old absences.
On porches and stoops the minor prophets lingered
Singing and playing host to the mended air:

And what was fair, or marvelous, or queer
The quickest clarity no longer angered.
As always the weather frowned upon major chances,
Leaves and violences too barely seen.

The simple grave resemblances of Myshkin.
Yet these, too far defined to hold a glance,
Sent promise of some milder reasoning,
As when the crippled newsboy cries "I'm saved"

With just the daily thought of being loved:
These gave a sign that turning is lessening,
As if to celebrate in lissom chants
The wise demeanor of a glutted ashcan.

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Two Poems by John Hollander

A STATUE OF SOMETHING

The great wooden figure of The River is finished, and yellow
And brown shadows attach themselves to the interior
Of the sculptor's studio, where he stands holding the hand
Of the short, naked lady as she steps down from her platform.
He is leading his model out into interpretation,
Life after art, re-engagement with a world whose shadows
Are insubstantial and always full of motion.
They are like the surface of water on the river
In which the model will swim, rejoining a broken
Circle of representations dancing in the sunlight,
Given a common substance by their chorus of shadows.
Presiding wood, fresh water, unpainted flesh,
On which the inland waves flash with an excitement
Beyond mere grandeur, more fragile than the language of
shadow
With which, for example, a painter might make his own
Late afternoon representations to the spirit of figures,
Showing all this, showing it what it had meant.

SOME OF THE PARTS

In the assurance of oncoming twilight that there is
A vast, pliable space containing regions of our life
That keep entirely in touch, day and night will not crack
Apart. The light on the cold grass will leave slowly, rising
Out of sight, and its claim on colors will be relinquished.
All surfaces will tacitly assent to this. The shell
Of night will start singing into the ear of the day's shell,
And they will have been washed in the one sea that is all depth
And no surface, yea, even like the little pond dwelling

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Off in the near corner of the audible world, waveless,
Bottomless, but brimming with an encouraging chorus
Of sounding night. Remembering which, in the swarm of noon's
Tiny-winged exigencies, will flake apart the promise
Of it, lying in the sun like the pieces of some dream.

Paul Auster

NORTHERN LIGHTS

These are the words
that do not survive the world. And to speak them
is to vanish

into the world. Unapproachable
light
that heaves above the earth, kindling
the brief miracle

of the open eye—

and the day that will spread
like a fire of leaves
through the first chill wind
of October

consuming the world

in the plain speech
of desire.

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Philip Dacey

WHERE WE WERE

It was a shadow scene.
Horses there would bolt
In the dim forest-flicker,
The limbs the wind took
Waved as if in lieu of words
That would not come to tell
The ways of half-light.
In that place wholly
Given, wholly unearned,
Nothing was either this or that,
We lived there in a kind of beauty
That was frightening, the spires of trees
Rose up to be swords in our eyes,
And low creatures moving
Dizzied us, who felt the needled
Floor go undulant.

Great crossings lived there,
Of light and dark, of earth
And projectiles from the earth,
Ascending things, that seemed
To want to go away.
We were caught at the crossing.

And when the trees would open,
The mass of the trees part as if
To let something through, nothing came through
Except everything beyond
The veil the rent trees were,
And I think it was enough for us.
No one complained, though our bodies
Made a music flecked with discord.
(How fine the discord flecked us,
A decoration for aristocrats!)

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It was a place to walk, it was a place,
And we walked, birds fell at our feet,
Inexplicable manna,
The signs flew between trees
And shook the branches.
We trembled like the branches.
I held on to you, and you—
I think you flew between the trees,
My sign.

You could not call it wandering, what we did,
I think it was the place
That wandered in us,
We seemed so large.

Marjorie Welish

SMOOTH AND ROUGH

Convention favors the right hand
and always attaining the top and bottom line (the stems
rising farther than this), and that the main roads
have cursive intersections like script.
Placed above the blackboard
the row of cards was a model blackboard.
I remember thumbtacks sinking through,
and when I looked at the letters
I liked the warmth of "a" next to "A," "b" next to "B,"
daughter near mother, but I did not believe
in consistently smooth feature;
the handsome model is not credible, in movies
handsome lines should be said by ugly men.

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Chester Weinerman

RAINCLOUDS

Rolling waves come on to cancel
the prints of cynical children
who daily run off into specks when
ever clouds fold over the puffs
of last hour's colored heaven.
Young black muchachos go on shining
shoes in the sporadic rainfall, and for
an extra quarter flip a wink, a tease.

You, like tarpaper on a shantytown roof
cover the tops of castles everywhere
that crumble whenever we turn our backs.
It is no different than watching the logs
lick the black insides of an Ashley belly
stove warming a one-man shelter
in the frozen white of Vermont, back home.
Your face flicked off in red chips,
then.

Wait for me, cheekens; I am running close
behind, plane ticket in hand, flapping
with stories to tell you may someday believe.

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Leonard Kriegel

HEMINGWAY'S RITES OF MANHOOD

"It takes a pretty good man to make any sense when he's dying."
Hemingway to Lillian Ross

I

Like children intent on claiming maturity, cultures turn against the heroes they themselves create. And they turn with a vengeance, as if what remained in the balance were not the validity of the hero but the ability of the culture to see itself as valid. The need to destroy, or at least reduce in stature, those who can no longer serve is a tendency of most cultures; in American culture, it seems an inevitability, part of the process by which we declare what is fashionable or unfashionable. Whether by his own design or through the lack of more attractive alternatives, the writer remains the culture's mirror. And in no other writer of the twentieth century—not in Fitzgerald, not even in Faulkner—has American culture seen the reflection of its own uncertainties better than in what it first made and then unmade of Ernest Hemingway.

That Hemingway is no longer fashionable is by now a cliché. Even those for whom he served as model are bound to find him boring if they go back to read him, as I recently did, without the youthful expectations he inspired. Few major writers have fallen so quickly from favor. Or so far. It is almost as if the survival of the man's memory has had to seek an excuse, a justification, while the writer is avoided, dealt with, when he is dealt with at all, through formal academic criticism which, no matter how perceptive, parodies the very promise he made to us when we were young. Today, those of the young who still want to be writers do not usually read him. Not, certainly, with the kind of passionate intensity with which I first read him in 1950, when I was seventeen and Hemingway's was a voice I could confidently adopt as a model: part-precursor, part-prophet, an echo of the kind of

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experience that promised to separate me from the common fate even though I suspected even then that his experience and his prose had already been frozen in ludicrous posturing. "You come right down to it," a would-be writer friend of mine, also seventeen, said to me, "not even Hemingway can be Hemingway."—A lesson resisted even as sentence was pronounced. And yet, I knew it was an accurate assessment, as accurate as anything I have since read about the man. In no other writer, at least in no other writer I had read to that point in my life, did art and life so fiercely impinge on one another, so that the payment for the one inevitably demanded the mythologizing of the other. Ultimately, he became too successful to sustain the myths. And he left too many debts in his wake, too many of us whom he forced to face the limitations of his life in the erroneous belief that he had consequently freed us from the necessity of facing the limitations of our own.

From the beginning, then, Hemingway could not be the Hemingway we thought we wanted. Long before his actual death, the reputation of Hemingway the writer had begun to wane. In point of fact, the critical assault began with his emergence in the 1920s. And from the first, his personality, as much as his prose, was the center of contention. In the literary hierarchy of reputations, Hemingway's case is important because so many critics instinctively understood that central to the achievement of Hemingway the writer was the question of Hemingway the man. In this respect, at least, he is more comparable to a writer such as Céline than he is to most of his American contemporaries. Taken together, his art and life reflect a man who saw himself as a *poète maudit*, but a *poète maudit* on a gargantuan scale. The controlled tone of the early prose masks an ambition so ferocious that it makes one, even today, wince at the disguises and counter-disguises the man had to create and then learn to live with. Even in his posthumously published memorial to his Paris days, *A Moveable Feast*, we discover the precise measurements of a prose—as fine a prose as its author had possessed since the period about which he was now writing—designed not to enclose his memories of a world but to settle scores. The man we meet here scoring points off the bodies of Ford Madox Ford and Gertrude Stein has carefully sealed off his real past. He is, as adolescents say, "getting his own back," creating a portrait in which memory rejects true intimacy to serve vengeance. *A Moveable Feast* sweeps the past clean of obstacles that threaten Hemingway the man. Fearful of the dimensions of his own failure, he withdrew into the hard core of a being he himself consciously fashioned: A *man*, an American man,

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who will justify or be damned. It is a memoir filled with ambushes of all those enemies who are themselves pictured as lying in wait—the rich, Ford, Stein, Dos Passos, lesbians, homosexuals, aesthetes, all those who threaten to interfere with the writer's dedication to craft and truth and self—above all, self. And the writer must still prove his manhood, first to himself, then to those others—or at least to their ghosts. In Hemingway's case, the need to prove his manhood was virtually conterminous with the craft he forged. Self and style were never separate. However famous the style became—so famous that it ultimately evolved into a parody of what it had been—it was subservient from the beginning to the man's need to vindicate his manhood. In Hemingway, even in the early Hemingway, it is rarely a question of style that the reader confronts; rather, it is how much he can afford to display or not display. The self's needs come first, even for the superb young craftsman capable of writing those brief chapters that pulsate like living tissue between the stories of *In Our Time.*

In speaking about the problems and possibilities of the hero as he defies the limits set by his knowledge of his own mortality, Ernest Becker repeats the claim that I believe lies at the heart of a great deal of contemporary psychoanalytic argument. "*Consciousness of death,*" he writes in *The Denial of Death,* "is the primary repression, not sexuality." I can think of few writers who better illustrate this than Hemingway, for whom the legitimate testing of the individual self's capacity is a given. Death was not merely a rite of passage; for Hemingway, it was the chief among the possibilities to be faced in placing one's body in physical danger. Consciousness of death blends his life and art. It lies at the resolute center of what he wrote and of the kind of man he envisioned himself to be. Faulkner was the more highly endowed writer; Fitzgerald responded more honestly to the complexities of American life; both Dreiser and Farrell understood how the taut lines of class work in this country; Hemingway, when he writes of such things at all, writes about them with all the glibness of a doctor's son slumming. The critic can point out that all of this is obvious and yet insist on the enduring facination of Hemingway, particularly for anyone trying to understand the price demanded for masculinity in America. For he wrapped his life and his art around that masculine vision with all the manipulative self-assertion of a drag queen dressing a mannequin behind a store window that exaggerates his every gesture to the crowd of onlookers outside, who are being played with as deftly as the mannequin's plaster-of-paris body.

Hemingway is not merely another autobiographical writer; his life

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remains his supreme fiction. It is the life which he parades before us, his selfhood encased in the trappings of the myths America created and Hemingway tried to live. In retrospect, the public bravado, the pictures of the great white hunter in *Esquire*, the Broadway friend of Walter Winchell and Toots Shor, all of these are small gestures of defiance, like graffiti on subway cars or dog droppings in the street, embarrassing and real and what one must put up with to bring the self through the days. As much as anything else, such manhood-posing explains the usual charge levelled against Hemingway. And well-levelled, let us admit. The man *is* adolescent. And the writer is, too. And he shows us, as few other writers do, how important it is that we recognize the truths the adolescent confronts as he tests his needs and ambitions. If Hemingway knew nothing else, he knew that the soul, too, sprouts its acne, and that such acne can never be eliminated, merely disguised and covered over. Understanding this will not change very much today. In the current drift toward a unisex culture, a drift which seems inevitable and perhaps even necessary, to understand Hemingway is probably not imperative. But in the future, after the unisex culture has established its primacy, we may again be able to put him to use. For one of the problems that both society and culture are again going to have to face is the question of exactly what we mean by manhood. To believe that the idea of manhood is simply going to disappear into an androgynous ether is naive. How do we go beyond narcissism and yet understand the male adolescent's need to come to terms with the challenges he poses for himself? The problem, we may discover, is remarkably old-fashioned, diametrically opposed to what we are moving towards today—the unicellular, the androgynous body unsexed by the very sexuality demanded of it and demeaned by the very democracy of possibilities that originally seemed to promise so much. Against this, the harsh stoicism of male adolescent pretense. It is well to remember that we once read Hemingway not for what he knew but for what he could demonstrate. He could seize hold of one's own coming-of-age and he could illuminate the harsh beginnings and false starts of becoming a man in America.

II

Hemingway's own life was simple enough, at least when we read about it. The man's complexity emerges from what he felt he had to make of that life. What saves him from being one more Midwestern bourgeois trying to find himself by running away from his own inner

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urges is his refusal to permit experience to pass him by. But even within that refusal, he exhibits a fundamental caution, approaching us like a man who inches his way forward. His response to experience was always measured, no matter how rebellious he seemed. *Poète maudit* or not, his life is stained with a solid American sense of propriety, as if, in becoming the Hemingway of legend, the man deliberately set out to make the life an American success story by simply inverting the morality of the solid bourgeoisie from whom he descended, to be the doctor's son able to find in the "differences" of his experience that which would make him the equal of his father and yet provide him with a greater destiny. There is nothing particularly original in this, nothing that really captures the contemporary reader's imagination. Hemingway's conservativism was inevitable, given the tone of his Midwestern past. And his conservatism is more than stylistic; he was a writer for whom limitation and measurement ultimately coincided. What he did best was what he controlled most carefully. When Faulkner criticized him for not taking chances with his prose, he had this in mind. And what was true of his prose style was equally true of the way he lived and of the way he tried to construct that life. He was not a true rebel. Perhaps he was not even rebellious. And the limitations of his prose are apparent in his life.

Now limitation in a great writer is similar to virtue in others—an interesting fact, but not particularly memorable unless some terrible price is paid for its possession. One could, of course, argue that Hemingway paid that price in his suicide. But even that speaks of limitation, an indication that in the long run he failed to separate his own life from that of his father. There is nothing particularly symbolic about Hemingway's suicide. One simply looks at it today as inevitable, part of Hemingway's measured response to life. In his recent book on Henry Miller, the modern American writer most fundamentally opposite to Hemingway, Norman Mailer captures the inevitability of that suicide: "The eye of every dream Hemingway had must have looked down the long vista of his future suicide—so he had a legitimate fear of chaos." Granted. And the legitimacy was to emerge as the only choice available, the only way in which the life could seize meaning from the times. He took that lead, too, from his father, obeying him and challenging him at one and the same time, as he had earlier obeyed and challenged him in hunting and fishing or, more subtly, in living with a solid bourgeois sense of obligation and duty. The Protestant haunts his children, even after the children declare themselves Catholic. One does not get away so easily in America.

For Hemingway, the suicide must have possessed a strangely

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redemptive note. But the redemption proves to be too expensive, at least for us. For our descendents, it will probably merely be boring, since suicide, like birth control, is in the process of being legitimatized as a simple necessity. "At a certain point of despair," writes A. Alvarez, "a man will kill himself in order to show he is serious." And that point is reached when the excess of pain threatens to turn consciousness itself into a hollow white light behind which the self, or at least what the prospective suicide views as the self, disintegrates. The struggle is between the obligation to endure pain and the need to take one's leave with some dignity intact. But both the endurance of pain and the possibility of maintaining one's dignity depend upon the conviction that the choice of suicide represents the culmination of a struggle. "He decided to pack it in" is how I heard a suicide recently described. A model sentence for our time. Simplicity has rarely been better served.

For Hemingway, who possessed a traditional Western view of suicide, the choice came down to a selection of humiliations. He had long since placed himself on the side of those for whom suicide represented a surrender, an action in which a man sheds his more courageous self and gives in to cowardice. That the action might be made authentic by the suicide's despair made it no less cowardly. Hemingway saw suicide as a negation, even the suicide of an artist who had long since been parodying his own best work and whose life had begun to assume the dimensions of a grotesquerie through the public parading of virtues which were supposedly private. To commit suicide was to give up on one's own manhood, to admit to the inadequacy of what he had, in that unfortunately memorable phrase, spoken of as "grace under pressure."

Hemingway left readers wondering why, like the grace of god, it was not available to all. And while he nowhere states it, "grace under pressure" is a specifically masculine grace to be fought for and hungered after as men fight for and hunger after those endowments they must possess to be men. The phrase is very close in meaning to what is meant today by "balls," which suggests not merely courage but courage eager to test its own limits. I suspect that this is one of the reasons why Hemingway was so singularly unsuccessful in creating women. His women characters are, with very few exceptions, boring and unreal. They are always secondary, and they seem to be little more than background against which his men create their destinies, rather disconcertingly similar to the bulls in *Death in the Afternoon*. Even in a work of nonfiction, such as *Green Hills of Africa*, Hemingway seems incapable of getting beyond the woman who establishes her presence only through her capacity to service her man. In that book, his wife is

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known as "Poor Old Mama," soon reduced to the initials P. O. M. in a peculiar, codified affection. Her speech, like the speech of the wife in *A Moveable Feast*, is ludicrous in its artificial formality. In a book which self-consciously announces its intention as being "to see whether the shape of a country and the pattern of a month's action can, if truly presented, compete with a work of the imagination," P. O. M. becomes a kind of jock swagger. Hemingway seems to ask us to look at the woman he caught, or who caught him, more or less as he asks us to look at the kudu he shot. "You two are very profound fellows," says P. O. M. to Papa and Pop when they speak of their love of Africa. She earns her passage there! Keep you mouth shut, your emotions in check, and your ass tight!

Ultimately, Hemingway's attitude toward suicide, and death in general, is what marks him off as an adolescent. But a great adolescent, a magnificent adolescent, and a far more interesting writer than his current reputation would have us recognize. Like the world of the adolescent, Hemingway's world is consistently uncertain. The possession of "grace under pressure" lacks permanence; the moment of triumph carries no guarantees for the future, except that one is going to have to fight to maintain that grace over and over again. Even to speak about it is to run the risk of loss, to find that it has disappeared, like a puff of smoke, and left one raging and impotent in its wake. All of this is overwhelmingly adolescent. And so is the fact that when temptation arrives, betrayal threatens. However painful, judgment is inevitable. And it is not qualified. One sees the extent to which Hemingway at his best embodies this idea in that remarkable story about his father's suicide, "Fathers and Sons." The meaning of the dead father's life lies in the challenge his suicide poses to Nick Adams, Hemingway's most faithful persona, just as the meaning of Nick's own life is to be in the challenge it poses to his own young son who wants to visit his grandfather's grave. That Nick has not yet visited his father's grave (in the story Nick is thirty-eight and seven or eight years seem to have passed since the suicide) reflects a primitive horror of suicide, the kind of attitude one might expect of an adolescent for whom the life of the father is still endowed with a certain magic. He is unable to let go of his father and he is, consequently, unable to forgive his father an act of cowardice.

III

The extent of Hemingway's commitment to the adolescent view can be seen in the way in which he treats pain. No other writer so

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consistently uses pain as a test of the capacity to endure. (It is worth pointing out here that Hemingway, not Faulkner, made us aware of *endurance* as a desirable quality, although, true to his fear of abstract nouns, he rarely used the word itself.) At no point are the interstices between the man and culture more decisive. What Hemingway's work provides is not so much a prose style as it is a personal style, a way of confronting the demands of American life. More instinctively than his peers, Hemingway understood the difference between pain as humiliation and pain as the promise of redemption. And it is this that the male adolescent so vigorously pursues. For he senses that pain *is* a testing, that it offers him a way of emerging with a singular presence, an identifiable self, one that may provide him the opportunity to work through the hypocrisies of conventional society. What pain does—the manner in which it promises redemption—is what probably lies behind a good deal of behavior that is usually thought of as masochistic. Pain demands. Above all, pain demands of the body. Although it is probably too much to claim that the body is most alive for the adolescent when he experiences pain, the fact is that pain heightens sensation. Not pain that is so great as to blind the individual to other sensations, but pain that enables an individual to measure his own capacity, to endure. There is a phrase of Becker's that is worth quoting here, for he speaks of how pain "calls the body to the forefront of experience." This seems to me one of the clues to Hemingway and it may prove to be one of the sources of his appeal in the future. The man simply endured an immense amount of pain and he did so consciously. It is not something that one can make light of, although the kind of courage Hemingway struggled to possess is not particularly fashionable any longer. But the body possesses its own record, its own truths. Wounds, broken bones, headaches caused by hypertension, the actual endurance that the man exhibited in his own life can only be thought of as awesome, even for someone who may bring a certain experience of his own to such things. The man was able to beat his body's protests down in a way that remains the adolescent's dream of coming through.

In Hemingway, pain is not sexual but it is sensual. An important distinction to keep in mind. In de Sade, pain is an invariable concomitant of pleasure; in Hemingway, it is the price one pays for possession of the self, a test of manhood in which the capacity to endure and the ability to "take it" are paramount. For he is most American in this—that he realizes that if the decisive forms of humiliation are of the spirit, they are based upon loss of control over one's own body. Nothing could be more adolescent. There is an athletic dimension to this, one that is

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bound to make particular sense to the male adolescent. It is well to remember that Hemingway was unusual in what he expected and demanded of his body; down through the years, he was to punish it with a consistency that seems more than coincidental. His own lifelong predilection for accidents is suspicious; his numerous broken bones, his wounds, his frequent courting of death, all speak of a man struggling to escape, to free himself from the challenges his rigorous adolescent structures have created.

In Hemingway, the body possesses a distinct life of its own. His own body, one suspects, betrayed him in that he could not reach the goals he set for it. In rereading Carlos Baker's biography, I would often find myself thinking that Hemingway's body was similar to a political system that had begun to break down of its own inner contradictions. The man was always being patched and mended. And yet that body created his subject matter as much as his mind did. Pain was the thesis it seized upon, and the body, as much as the mind, dictated the strategies his imagination might employ to create an antithesis, those srategies within which he might withstand the threat of pain as humiliation.

The many photographs one sees of Hemingway depict a man who, until the last ten years of his life at least, might have served as the physical model for Fitzgerald's Tom Buchanan had Fitzgerald only known him before sitting down to write *The Great Gatsby*. It is an American body, a Midwestern body, a "cruel body"—but it is also a body that exerts presence, its very physicality set in opposition to what the world can do to it. The character seems expressed in the body; it rolls back into itself and it is tight, controlled, powerful. And it seems to physically search for dignity. This is an important point, since in Hemingway the endurance of pain is itself a kind of dignity, while the loss of dignity is the chief threat that can be made against the individual. Like the imagination, the body is condemned to express itself. Fishing, hunting, skiing—in Hemingway, these are not sports but states of being. Much of the action of his best fiction is controlled by what his protagonists demand of their bodies. That long-honored American dichotomy between what Emerson called "man thinking" and man feeling is even more exaggerated in Hemingway than it is in Faulkner or Twain. (And I use *feeling* here to suggest the tactile along with the emotional.) Paleface and Redskin have rarely been so fragmented. And such fragmentation is especially notable in a man who, as Alfred Kazin wrote, "attempted that absolute identification of life with literature, in the name of precision of feeling, that was the hallmark of

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the moderns and of their *grande époque.*" Hemingway's body can be said to overwhelm—and the first to feel its heaviness was Hemingway himself.

Pain not only brings the body into a heightened awareness of its own being, it also testifies to the individual's inevitable failure. There are limits to endurance. Hemingway conceived of courage as the ability not to ignore but to live with pain and its promise; he instinctively knew that one did not have to be a masochist to conceive of pain as liberating. And here, too, his groping is adolescent. To be able to endure physical pain, punishment, without surrendering the self's ability to come through is fundamental to the world of the male adolescent. Such pride is a fence between the adolescent and the world outside; the ways in which he measures prowess are not the ways of conventional bourgeois society. But the pressure upon the adolescent must be physical. What he cannot take is that which threatens to expose him to forms of corruption which are outside the boundaries he recognizes.

It was Philip Young who in nineteen-fifty three first suggested that "The Battler," one of Hemingway's best known and most frequently anthologized stories, is a story about Nick Adams' confrontation with homosexuality, an evil which lies beyond his psychological province and which frightens him more than anything else he has yet encountered in his life because he is not equipped to handle it. He does not know what masculine behavior is in the situation he confronts. In a 1966 revision of his book, Young pointed out that the theme crops up once again in *A Moveable Feast,* "violently, obsessively . . . as it is used here—a kind of ultimate in evil." Having revolted against his middle-class home and taken to the road, Nick is testing himself with what he meets along the way. He has been thrown off a train by a railroad brakeman after having been beaten up. He can handle this because it is something the adolescent is prepared for. Such pain is merely physical, and Nick prides himself, as Ad Francis also does, on the fact that he "could take it." He has been beaten up, but he has not been humiliated. His confrontation with the punchdrunk fighter and the shadowy Negro tramp, Bugs, is far more threatening. And Nick's instincts are correct. What he senses as Ad turns on him is that he may discover someone who can not only hurt him physically but can make him subservient to his will. Ad Francis can humiliate Nick as no railroad brakeman can. Implicitly, the threat he embodies is sexual; he is going to rob Nick of his burgeoning adolescent sexuality.

It scarcely matters whether Hemingway's protests that homosexu-

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ality is not part of the story are taken seriously. He may not have thought so, but as Young so correctly sensed, Nick knows better than his creator. The child of the middle class can accept pain; he can even be eager for it, since he, too, must measure his prowess. But he must avoid humiliation—and homosexuality is a form of humiliation. It was a theme that was to haunt Hemingway, but perhaps nowhere did he state it more succinctly or more analytically than in *Death in the Afternoon*, the most bloated and even pompous of his books: "Courage comes from such a short distance; from the heart to the head; but when it goes no one knows how far away it goes." Nick might not have known, but he was smart enough not to want to take any chances of finding out.

His creator was more complex. Even in those personal encounters he orchestrated, Hemingway appears to have been an unusually "dirty" fighter. He cast off the traditional Protestant virtue of "fair play" in an attempt to adopt the ethics of a street fighter. As a fighter, his lack of talent was transformed into a lack of integrity. The man's style quickly became the writer's public substance. His famous fights with Morley Callaghan and Max Eastman are reflections of this. Perhaps even more revealing is an incident described by Donald Honig in a recent book, *Baseball When The Grass Was Green*. Billy Herman, a superb second baseman for the Chicago Cubs and Brooklyn Dodgers, recalls that in the spring of 1942, when the Dodgers trained in Havana, Hemingway invited four of the Dodgers, Herman, Augie Galan, Larry French, and Hugh Casey to accompany him to a Havana gun club and then to his house. He insisted that they drink with him, fed them, gave each of them an autographed copy of *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. Quite suddenly, he challenged Casey to a fight. "As Hugh was putting his gloves on, Hemingway suddenly hauled off and belted him." Casey then knocked Hemingway down repeatedly, until Hemingway "kicked Casey in the balls." He then insisted that Casey return the next day to fight a duel. "And he's dead serious about it," insists Herman. "He wanted to kill Casey. Hughie'd got the better of him, and Hemingway wanted to kill him."

IV

None of this is to suggest what Hemingway's personality was like, or, for that matter, whether he can be said to have even possessed a personality. Modern writers tend to create personas rather than to have

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personalities. And personas, like principles, come in layers; one layer is peeled off to show what lies beneath, rather like a sun-burned bather peeling his flesh to create an illusion for the moment. All that one can say about Hemingway is that he was not a particularly attractive human being, that the ravages of his own ego were what he could never overcome. In reading about him, rarely do we touch the actual man. The portrait that one finds in Baker's biography contains a great deal of information about what happened in the life, but it avoids (in large part out of Baker's belief that the best Hemingway's biographer could hope to achieve was a composite "from which all that is false has been expunged and in which most of what is true has been set forth") the implications of the events it describes. There is something much too official about the man we meet here; he has been carefully embalmed and the sign on the tomb reads, "Great Writer." A. E. Hotchner's personal memoir, *Papa Hemingway*, is apparently more the product of its author's determination to seize Hemingway as a meal ticket than it is the product of what actually happened between the men. Lillian Ross's famous *New Yorker* profile is encrusted by that magazine's particular kind of nastiness, a devastating hauteur more suitable for the life of a brassiere manufacturer than for the life of a writer shooting off bursts of himself like an uncontrollable child on the 4th of July.

Nor are the memoirs and reminiscenses of two Hemingway sisters and one brother particularly helpful. They are reverential, piqued, defensive, often embarrassing. His sister Sunny, for example, is upset over the fact that she possesses no autographed copies of his books. On the other hand, it should be noted that his sister Marcelline's *At the Hemingways*, although a dull book, does provide us with a solid if conventional picture of a Midwestern Protestant family at the turn of the century, secure in its aspirations and its materialism and untroubled by the world outside Oak Park. Even Mary Welsh Hemingway's recently published *How It Was* seems strangely lifeless, although it attempts to present the facts of their life together. The only exception to this that I know of is the recent memoir by Hemingway's youngest son, Gregory, a moving document which gives us a better sense of what the man actually was like than anything else I have read. But Gregory Hemingway's portrait, too, is inevitably limited: no matter how tough and truthful, it is difficult to trust a son speaking about his father, especially when the relationship is as complex as the one described here. Hemingway seems to have been most emotionally violent about this youngest son, and his ambivalence is matched by Gregory's.

But even if there were an absolutely reliable version of the man's

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life, it would not do for my purposes. It is not, in the long run, the events of the life that matter; it is what the life continues to mean to me and to others of my generation, as well as what it may come once again to mean in the future. For Hemingway remains an American paradigm. In the final analysis, it was not his prose nor his narrative skills, formidable as these were, that writers who came after him had to come to terms with. And it was certainly not his mind or his emotional insights or his complexity. It was that he set himself up as an authority on virtues which are all too pressing in the life of any American male. Almost inevitably, one's reactions to Hemingway evolved into one's reactions to the themes his life and work attempted to unify: the ability to use pain, manhood as a response to the challenges one sensed in the very air, the necessity of courage and the even greater necessity not to speak about it. To remember such things, and to remember one's own experience of them, is burdensome, embarrassing. But it is also real. The man himself was often nasty, small-minded, parochial, even dull-witted. The small-town anti-Semitism, the awful bragging, the sycophantic friendships, the cruelty to his sons and to friends who had once helped him—all of this makes the actual man a most unattractive figure. And yet, no matter how corrupt, limited, even ridiculous he may seem today, I find myself grateful for the example he set, or at least the example I and my friends thought he set. And in this I suspect that my own experience is fairly representative.

At eighteen, I read Joyce for language and Faulkner for style and Eliot for that middle-aged desperation I had already learned to call "our situation." But I read Hemingway—and it is this which is most embarrassing today—to learn how to live and to see whether, having been broken in body by an encounter with polio at the age of eleven, I could still be as good a man as I thought I had a chance to be. My involvement with Hemingway, however adolescent, was also distinctly personal. He was, as I wrote years later, my "nurse." That he was to be the victim of the virtues the culture endowed him with is beside the point. My friend was right. Not even Hemingway could be Hemingway. But he could pretend. And we . . . we, at least, could try.

V

In the final analysis, however, the life fails to serve even those who recognize the integrity of the adolescent vision. Hemingway is a loser. After courage has been served at the table, much like the wine chilled in

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the trout stream in *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway shrinks from his purpose. He was unable to make the self indistinguishable from the self's world. The inadequacies of his characters pull and scratch at him. They are all attitudes, poses, heavy wooden statues carved by a sculptor for whom mass must disguise a lack of individuation. Colonel Cantwell, Thomas Hudson, the patent falsity of these personas subsumes even the prose. And the results are devastating. Take, for example, *Islands in the Stream*, apparently the last book which Hemingway pushed to completion (although, in fairness to him, he was evidently never ready to see it published). One might argue that it reads, at least in some of its parts, fairly well. The novel contains bursts of true descriptive power, particularly when Hemingway creates the sea or the beaches. And the power is made even greater by the sense of loss inherent in what they force one to remember—the Hemingway of *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises*, for whom a single sentence could be made to carry so much authority that its author might legitimately claim to be a master. For the most part, however, the prose is flaccid and weak-willed, exposing some vital flaw in its author. In fact, the only way *Islands in the Stream* makes sense is if we read it as a series of tired reflections on manhood by a writer whose deepest resources have finally betrayed him. The book parodies not the work of the past but the past of the man.

Of all of Hemingway's heroes, Thomas Hudson is the most artificial. One is tempted to call him pompous. He is also as peripheral to the action as any of Hemingway's fictional embodiments, an unreal figure limited by the very qualities which Hemingway had begun to dispense as philosophical anodynes. Thomas Hudson's courage is taken for granted, yet the reader never understands why; his sense of identity is never established, since Hemingway apparently assumed that the reader would take the Hudson-Hemingway collation for granted, as he himself obviously did; and the affection, even reverence, that the other characters in the novel feel for him seems to have no basis in anything that the reader sees. Even the self as philosopher-father demands fictional life. For the writer, nothing can be assumed—one of the lessons that the early Hemingway himself taught. But Thomas Hudson is simply there, like the sun. And the only abiding interest his character possesses is autobiographical. *Islands in the Stream* can only live as an extension of its author's life. For it is the life, and the life alone, through which Hemingway attempts to justify this fiction.

But readers have grown too conscious, both of Hemingway's limitations and of Thomas Hudson's. In no other novel does Heming-

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way seem quite so much the prisoner of his past. He is still the doctor's son, and the boundaries he long since set for the experiences he was willing to absorb have pinched his work tightly, shrivelled and dried it and accentuated the sagging flesh. In the long run, the life, too, would no longer exert power over the imaginations of others. What he permitted himself to see was what he gave us. The virtues he extolled have not outlasted him. In the end, he was imprisoned by a mind for which evil was so visible that it lacked diabolism. And so he substituted elegy for the severity of the writer's true task, to stand and observe the two-edged nature of evil, to seek out its ambiguities, to speak to our manhood out of all the tawdry mess and squander he himself was going to leave in his wake. As inadequate as Thomas Hudson is, one might then have touched the man behind him.

However, the man had gone under, probably even before he created Thomas Hudson. "The legitimate fear of chaos" had been turned into self-promotion. There are ways to set Hemingway's story right. One wishes that near the end he had been able to seize hold of his own very fragmentary being and write about that brittle edge of macho in which proving one's manhood is the self's true desperation. And not a quiet desperation at that, but one that sent him baying at the moon. For the manhood trial is never over, never complete, and manhood is never really won. One suspects that Hemingway might have written about that as no one else before him had done. Having come through those formidable early years and having transformed himself into an advertisement for the self's ambition even as his talent dwindled, he might yet have written a novel so naked in its judgment and so final in the quality of its desperation that the snide remarks about his capacities might read today as parodies of their own emptiness. Instead, he eliminated all hints of vulnerability. Never mind that the house was caving in; he would take his leave as a man and refuse to admit the imminence of catastrophe.

It was no longer pride that sustained him at the end, just paranoid fantasies of federal agents swooping out of the Idaho mountains to seize what remained of his privacy, his money, the struggles and secrets that he had banked in his mind like a miser. Africa and Spain and Paris in the twenties—all were to disappear in what his son calls "Fort Hemingway." The symbolic curve has brought him into the harshest isolation of his life. Fort Hemingway stands over its owner, the immense symbol of his life's end.

> It had been purchased early in his illness, but seemed to presage it. Set well back from the road, it was an almost bunkerlike blockhouse,

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> built of poured concrete to last two hundred years, an ideal buttress against the world, and as safe a refuge as could be found for a paranoid. It lacked only catwalks and an electrified fence to be as secure as Trotsky's redoubt in Mexico.

A brave passage for a son to write. Inevitably, however, one wishes that Hemingway himself, for one moment before he pulled the trigger of the most famous shotgun in American literary history, had paused to frame a sentence in which he told us what he had learned of the failure of heroism, the inadequacy of courage, a sentence into which he managed to put all that he now knew about the terror of being a man, of not measuring up. In this world, at least, each of us is consumed by the energies set loose by his own failures. But we always expect something more of our teachers. And we deserve more. Or at least one would like to think so.

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Amitai Etzioni

THE NEOCONSERVATIVES

Among those anticipating, promoting, participating in and benefiting from the past few years' shift to the right in the national mood is a group of social observers and essayists who are coming to be called "neoconservatives." For the past half decade and more they have dedicated themselves—often with considerable sense of mission, one might add—to elaborating the intellectual rationale behind public policies that would turn away from social activism, government intervention, and grand schemes to reform America—and rely instead on the private sector, the market mechanisms, and traditional institutions such as the family and local community. The group encompasses many of America's best known and most often quoted members of the intellectual elite including Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Robert Nisbet, Daniel P. Moynihan, and James Q. Wilson, as well as less often cited Samuel P. Huntington, Edward C. Banfield, and Ernest van den Haag.

Despite significant differences of tone, style, and temperament neoconservatives qualify as a school because they all share the same basic views of society and human nature. Because neoconservatives are often in print and on the air, their basic position is well known: freedom and equality, far from being compatible values, are seen as frequently in conflict with each other. The main reason is that freedom to neoconservatives means noninterference by government with exercise of individual and group preferences and "natural" social patterns and tendencies. Equality, however, inasmuch as it fails to evolve naturally, tends to require a government to promote it; ergo, efforts to promote equality threaten freedom. More generally, neoconservatives are concerned about the oppressive encroachment of government bureaucracies on the spontaneous capabilities of individuals, families, communities, and voluntary associations—be it for purposes of consumerism, environmental or worker protection, or whatnot.

Also, neoconservatives see inequality, at least certain forms of inequality, as a positive social feature. They tend to see a society of

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equals as unwieldy and as unworkable as an army composed only of foot soldiers. Society may not require "a ruling class" but it can no more do without its various elites—cultural, political, economic, social—than followers can do without leaders. And, as long as inequality is based on talent and achievement, it is, according to neoconservatives, not only necessary but also quite fair.

As concerns human nature, neoconservatives are on the pessimistic side: human beings are not born "good," then mucked up by society's injustices (though still capable of being set right again via deliberate efforts ranging from social reform to individual psychotherapy). Quite the opposite: society is a continual struggle to impose qualities such as order and self-restraint on individuals whose inner drives press them toward disorder, insatiability, and selfishness. Thus neoconservatives are highly skeptical of educational, therapeutic, and rehabilitative efforts to tame and harness these drives. The best that can be expected is that authority may serve to keep a lid on man's psychic cauldron. Writes James Q. Wilson in *Time:*

> . . . from the vantage point of 200 years we should have only modest expectations for what our institutions, facing these problems, can accomplish. We will not eliminate the causes of crime, nor will we rehabilitate offenders in any large numbers. But if prisons cannot rehabilitate, at least they can punish and isolate.

The sense that one is quite familiar with these positions quickly gives way when one ponders the political dilemma of neoconservatives: how is an ideology which openly embraces elites rather than masses, achievements rather than entitlements, "lids" rather than what comes naturally, to be sold to the masses? To put it differently, approximately 30 per cent of Americans see themselves as conservatives; they need not be sold; they already subscribe to these views, although they may enjoy seeing them elaborated—the way people who have already bought Chryslers read chiefly Chrysler ads. But how is one to get to those attracted to the other brands—the nearly 42 percent who see themselves as middle-of-the-roaders, and 29 percent who consider themselves liberals?

Some neoconservatives largely ignore this "marketability" issue; they are unabashedly ideological, adamant, hard-hitting, and let the chips fall where they may. Their appeal is typically sectarian, and they pay the price—they are *not* the mass media's neoconservative heroes. Other neoconservatives concern themselves much more with the values and views of nonneoconservatives and are in this sense less dogmatic,

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more pragmatic—and have a wider appeal, although their basic position is quite similar.

A typical unabashed, true-blue neoconservative is Samuel P. Huntington, who has never been bashful about baring the undemocratic premises that underlie his neoconservatism. In 1957 he closed his book, *The Soldier and the State*, by portraying West Point as the closest contemporary embodiment of the inegalitarian ideal. In a passage that comes about as close to poetry as any that claims to be political science, he writes of the military academy:

> There is ordered serenity. The parts do not exist on their own, but accept their subordination to the whole. Beauty and utility are merged in gray stone. Neat lawns surround compact, trim homes, each identified by the name and rank of its occupant. The buildings stand in fixed relation to each other, part of an over-all plan, their character and station symbolizing their contributions, stone and brick for the senior officers, wood for the lower ranks. The post is suffused with the rhythm and harmony which comes when collective will supplants individual whim. West Point is a community of structured purpose, one in which the behavior of men is governed by a code, the product of generations. There is little room for presumption and individualism. The unity of the community incites no man to be more than he is. In order is found peace; in discipline, fulfillment; in community, security.

His final stanzas counsel not only admiration but emulation, even if it goes against the American grain:

> West Point is a gray island in a many colored sea, a bit of Sparta in the might of Babylon. Yet is it possible to deny that the military values—loyalty, duty, restraint, dedication—are the ones America most needs today? That the disciplined order of West Point has more to offer than the garish individualism of Main Street?

In his bicentennial contribution to *The Public Interest* entitled "The Democratic Distemper," Huntington diagnosed America's sociopolitical ailments as stemming from "an excess of democracy," adding, "Al Smith once remarked, 'The only cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy.' Our analysis suggests that applying that cure at the present time could well be adding fuel to the fire."

Huntington is quite aware that such baldfaced conservatism could hardly lead to mass acclaim. In a letter to *The New York Times* he explains, ". . . if I wished to 'forge a new base of power,' I could find much more productive ways to do it than to espouse a conservatism

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which has always been a minority stand in the American political tradition."

Another whose neoconservatism is unadulterated and too strong a brew for mass consumption is Edward C. Banfield. His *Unheavenly City* frankly espouses the view that urban poverty is much less the result of general economic and social conditions such as unemployment, exploitation, and the legacies of racism and discrimination than of characterological defects in the poor themselves. Poverty persists because society insulates such individuals from the negative consequences of their improper attitudes and actions—thereby, in effect, encouraging them. Writes Banfield:

> This principle implies that the individual should be allowed to suffer penalties (loss of the reward at the very least) if he does not behave as he should. Herbert Spencer was prepared to follow this principle to its logical conclusion, allowing those who failed to provide for the future to starve in their old age in order that others might see from their examples the advantage of saving. Few people today, however, would consider the issue settled by the principle that a cruel deterrent may in the long run be less cruel than the consequences of not deterring. Indeed, few people recognize that there sometimes *is* a problem of choice between these alternatives. The almost universal opinion today is that, both for his own sake and that of his society, an individual must not be left to suffer the consequences of his actions. If, for example, he has chosen a life of improvidence, he cannot for that reason be allowed to remain below the poverty line. To give him money, however, is to give him an incentive to persist in his ways. . . .

The more bashful neoconservative basic message may be the same, but it is often espoused not as a matter of principle but of pragmatism. As a corollary, they typically write tentatively, as if pulled reluctantly toward conclusions by the overwhelming weight of logic and evidence. While ideological conservatives are more inclined to dispute the desirability of reform goals, pragmatic neoconservatives are more likely to claim that they favor these goals in theory but are forced to point out that attaining them is not feasible or exacts too high a price on resources or other values. In the same vein, pragmatic neoconservatives are more apt to criticize reform activists' means rather than their values, arguing that particular means are to be preferred as less costly or disruptive to other values—without explicitly noting that the means they favor happen to reflect neoconservative values.

Typical of these pragmatists is Nathan Glazer. His writing is careful and scholarly and his observations judicious. Thus, in his most

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recent work concerning Affirmative Action, *Affirmative Discrimination*, he does not attack outright the value of equality, nor, directly, even Affirmative Action. He favors "equal opportunity," a time-honored formula which fails to deal with the question of how to equalize opportunities for people who begin from largely different starting points, precisely where discrimination-in-reverse—at the core of Affirmative Action—enters. As for Affirmative Action, Glazer asks that it be "re-examined," because, he holds, it is not necessary for middle-class blacks (they make it, he says, without it) and does not work for lower-class blacks (among whom unemployment is rampant).

Similarly, it is instructive to compare pragmatic and popular James Q. Wilson's views on the proper societal approach to crime and punishment with those of ideological and controversial Ernest van den Haag. (Each has a recent book: respectively, *Thinking About Crime* and *Punishing Criminals.*) Van den Haag's position is that improving the conditions of the disadvantaged is no solution to the crime problem; indeed, it is more likely to promote than to deter crime by fueling the expectations, envy, and frustration of the poor. Wilson, in contrast, does not deny that poverty helps spawn crime and that overcoming poverty is therefore a useful way of combating it. Rather he argues that poverty alone does not account for enough of the "variance": the majority of poor people are not criminals. Hence, to focus on overcoming poverty as a means of reducing crime is to invest our resources and energies disproportionately to this factor's causative weight. Moreover, explains Wilson, those who insist on combating the "root causes" of crime—by which they often mean poverty, alienation and associated family break-up—are also concentrating on the least tractable of crime's causes. However meritorious such strategies of societal reform and rehabilitation may be in theory, more is to be gained pragmatically by tailoring our corrective efforts to the immediate causes of crime which lie in individual motivation. Thus, by a different route, Wilson arrives at much the same concrete proposals for public policy changes as Van den Haag: i.e., concentrate on punishment and deterrence, making it clear that "crime does not pay" via such measures as mandatory jail sentences, restrictions on judicial discretion, and limits on plea bargaining.

Perhaps the most popular pragmatic neoconservative is Daniel Bell, who is most reluctant to accept the label, calling himself a "right-wing social democrat." Unlike other neoconservatives, Bell does not argue explicitly that the division of wealth and power in America is fundamentally a "reward system." In other words, "have-nots" are

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those who have not worked as hard or as long or have not demonstrated the requisite talent or accomplishment. The "have-nots" are entitled to a share, Bell says. The problem is that they refuse to be content. In their hunger for an even bigger bite of the societal apple, they have let their appetites grow to an extent that no apple can satisfy. Demands have become entitlements, a sense that each group has a right to a growing income, wealth, health, and all else that is to be had. Being "fanatic," the groups are unwilling to negotiate down their fantasies and they refuse to compromise, thus threatening the stability and ultimately the existence of the American society in their frenzy.

Voicing a related fear, Aaron Wildavsky warns in a *Commentary* article of ". . . the manufacture of incompatible policy demands that impose burdens on government which no government can meet." Again Wildavsky does not say that the various groups—the poor, the blacks, all the other minorities—have no right to what they agitate government for. Rather, he says, if they all try to cash in their moral chips at once—to collect on what they feel society owes them for past and present injustices—they will find not only not enough money in the bank, but no more bank.

Kristol writes, "neo-conservatism is not *at all* [italics mine] hostile to the idea of a welfare state, but it is critical of the Great Society version of this welfare state. . . . It is skeptical of those social programs that create vast and energetic bureaucracies to 'solve social problems.' . . . it is opposed to the paternalistic state." While Kristol cites Social Security and unemployment insurance as acceptable examples of the welfare state, his fondness is for the market mechanisms which, he says, have the right "to respond efficiently to economic realities while preserving the maximum degree of individual freedom."

Bell similarly came to embrace the market as the way to bring into balance the explosion of social wants. "In many public-policy discussions, it is assumed that our choices are either administrative regulation to achieve those ends—or abandoning the ends. But the market can often be used to achieve them efficiently. The market provides for self-adjustment and self-regulation within a framework of rules."

One reads these and similar lines of the Harvard expert, unable to believe that he can really be either so naive or so disingenuous. Even a sophomore, and not necessarily in sociology, knows that the market, far from maximizing the freedoms of the individual, maximizes the range of choice only of those with a high buying power while restricting that of persons with low buying power. Unlike the polity in which the notion of one individual, one vote is at least very crudely

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approximated, the market offers individuals as many (or as few) votes as they have dollars. Moreover, an odd discount mechanism works by which the richer you are, the more you get per dollar; for instance, a small saver will get lower interest on his savings than a big saver and will pay a higher interest on loans he takes. Though one can argue that both politics and market relations are bound to reflect overall the existing structure of power and privileges—inequities politics modifies, the market magnifies.

Kristol and Bell argue that you can use the market to introduce the social changes you desire, but this ignores the need to deal with the powerful people who oppose such changes, whose opposition can scarcely be countered without political mobilization of those who favor change. Societal stability is a classic conservative value. It was always a conservative line to call upon the underprivileged to sit still so as not to upset national unity, law and order. These arguments gloss over the possibility that a class of people may find their needs better served in a different societal structure (hence one cannot assume that they will be scared off by fear of overly disturbing this one). Studies by William Gamson and others show that the fear of instability and violence is one of the main reasons those in power eventually come around to make concessions to the have-nots. As for the argument that if the underprivileged voice their needs or demand their entitlements, the society will erupt in a war of all-against-all, the result of unreasonable, fanatic, intransigent minorities, the brief history of the turbulent sixties suggests quite the opposite: given rather limited concessions to minorities (and youth) violence (never all that high on a historically comparative scale) subsided and they returned to working within the system—rather than to overthrowing it.

Thus, after decades of relative neglect of the conservative position, we now have an articulate new group of advocates. They come in two wrappings, or more precisely, one quite unwrapped and one carefully packaged. Each to his own taste.

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Nathan Halper

HOW SIMPLE: A TALE OF JOYCE AND POUND

Wonderworker

In September, 1916, James Joyce wrote to Yeats, "I can never thank you enough for having brought me into relations with your friend Ezra Pound who is indeed a wonder worker." A few years later, the phrase "wonder worker" developed a second meaning.

Ezra Pound had liked the beginning of *Ulysses*. But in March, 1918, after reading the chapter introducing Bloom, he complained about the episode in the outhouse—"You overdo the matter"—saying that it would be better "without such detailed treatment of the dropping feces." Without telling Joyce, he removed about twenty lines before sending the installment on to the *Little Review*. A few months later, in a letter to Joyce, he described himself as a bit more phallic, but less interested than Joyce in "the excrement and feces of human beings and animals."

About this time, Joyce came across a leaflet for "Wonderworker, the world's greatest remedy for rectal complaints." If Joyce was "rectal," Pound—who helped to lessen his distress—was "indeed a wonder worker."

On the 10th of June, 1919, after reading the eleventh chapter, Pound worried once again about the anal activity. He had learned that he must not make deletions. But he implied that a few were advisable. "I shall send off mss. . . . But you will have plenty of time . . . to revise if you want to." "One can fahrt," he said, "with less pomp and circumstance." He repeated his "gallic preference for the Phallus . . . know mittel europa humour runs to the other orifice . . . fahrt, yes, but not as climax to the chapter."

Joyce did not follow his advice. The chapter appeared in the *Little Review* with its Middle European "humour" undiminished. Bloom's problem is depicted with "all pomp and circumstance." He gets his relief only in the last few paragraphs.

When he came to prepare this segment for publication in *Ulysses*,

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Joyce did nothing to refine it. In fact, he was not able to resist a mischievous addition. At a moment when Bloom is struggling with his flatulence, he thinks, "Wish I could. Wait." After this, Joyce inserted the phrase, "That wonderworker if I had."

Four hundred pages later, this allusion is explained. In the "Ithaca" chapter, the prospectus for Wonderworker is quoted. "It helps and soothes . . . in case of trouble in breaking wind, assists nature in the most formidable way, insuring instant relief." If a reader recalls the original allusion, he will understand what Bloom had in mind. Even then, he will not know what the writer was saying for his own amusement. If he (Joyce) had used "wonder worker's" advice, Bloom would have had more "instant relief."

Joyce did not quote the pamphlet verbatim; he improved its phrases. We may be sure that "assists nature in the most formidable way" was not found in the prospectus. It's a dubious recommendation for something which is meant to soothe. In contrast, it is relevant to Pound. He is not only the English word "formidable." Because he said he has a "gallic preference," Joyce has chosen to describe him with a French locution. Pound himself—and the way he assists nature—are certainly *formidable.* There is also his reputed sexual prowess—"Ladies find Wonderworker especially useful."

In 1926, Joyce had another occasion to use "Wonderworker" in reference to Pound. While retaining his admiration for *Ulysses,* Pound made less flattering remarks about the chapters he had seen of Joyce's *Work in Progress.* In December, in a letter to the touchy writer, complaining that he could not see "what which has to do with where," he said that "Nothing short of divine vision or a new cure for the clapp" could "possibly be worth all the circumambient peripherization."

Joyce was working on the introductory chapter. The first pages include the battle of Waterloo sequence. In it, he is dealing with many areas of struggle. On one level, the battlefield is Art. Joyce himself (as he always does) serves as his own best model of the embattled Artist. He is the Emperor. His opponent, Wellington, carries the traditional standards. He represents the critics who are hostile to the Artist's innovations.

In accounts of many of his battles, Wellington is described as watching through a telescope. In the Waterloo sequence, there are allusions to this instrument. It is not only an authentic detail, it is a trope for Wellington himself. Its meaning—"watcher from afar"—applies equally to the man who employs it. In his role as critic, he

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watches the participants: those who do the bleeding. He assesses their achievements. He sets the course that they ought to follow. Conversely, Ezra Pound was the very model of a literary campaigner. He chose his troops, he trained them, planned the strategy and tactics, put them in the right positions, took care of logistics, provided ammunition, saw to it that they got a bit of rations.

When he wrote the first few drafts, Joyce had not yet read the letter disapproving of *Work in Progress.* If he thought of Pound as a warden of the status quo, this was limited perhaps to the other's prudence on the subject of anal activities. By and large, the allusions were to Pound as commander—to the managerial quality that had moved Joyce to call him "wonder worker." But there were some of the same nature as the one Joyce had put in *Ulysses.* These allusions were adapted to the frame of Waterloo. A no-nonsense Wellington-Pound makes his blunt remarks. For example—(under the distortion)—"This is the Wellington cry. Bromme, Cambromme!'" He is *brumming,* (German for grumbling, growling), that the other side is using *le mot de Cambronne.* This is *merde*—the *mot* Cambronne used at Waterloo. As in the case of Joyce, it was a refusal to surrender. (Notice that "the big Wellington telescope" is in contrast to "the other orifice." It is extendible and is shaped like a phallus.)

The first few drafts were written in the fall of 1926. In February, 1927, Joyce started to revise the early chapters for publication in *transition.* In the interval, he had seen the letter and in *transition* there are several allusions to it. Thus—in Chapter Five, Joyce has a list of phrases which may be used to describe his new work. He added *A New Cure for an Old Clap*—a reference to Pound's remark, with the implication that, *pace* Ezra Pound, it may be "worth all the circumambient peripherization."

In 1936, looking forward to publication of *Finnegans Wake,* Joyce turned again to revision of these chapters. In the Waterloo passage, a charge was added to the "cry" of Wellington. "Art is too loose!" The hostility to *Work in Progress* has been related to Pound's previous complaint about Mr. Bloom and his anal activity. The looseness of which Pound grumbles is an amplification of the looseness suggested by *le mot de Cambronne.* (About this time, Pound made a similar comparison. In a letter of March, 1937, he wrote to Hilaire Hiler, "No need of *transition* crap or Jheezus in progress. I am about through with that diarrhoea of consciousness.")

This was later. In the *transition* version, (April, 1927), Joyce showed a more immediate response. He had thought of Pound as a

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"wonder worker" in two senses of the phrase. The meaning it had in the letter to Yeats: the meaning in *Ulysses*. Now it acquired a third. We have noted that the telescope is a figure for Pound. In the early versions, it did not have a name. But Joyce was hurt by the disapproval. In the version of April, 1927, it was given the name of "Wounderworker."

Esra

There was also the question of the poems. Joyce wrote to Harriet Weaver that he had been asked if he had written enough since *Chamber Music* to constitute a book. "I did not trust my opinion of it as I rarely thought of verse. . . . I mentioned this to Pound and asked could I show him, say, two. . . . A few days after . . . he handed me back the envelope but said nothing. I asked him what he thought of them and he said: They belong in the Bible or the family album with the portraits. I asked: You don't think they are worth reprinting at any time? He said: No, I don't." Joyce, no admirer of his own poems, knew they were breaking no new ground. If Pound disapproved, it was not as Wellington. Yet the words were painful; they added to the designation of Pound as "Wounderworker." On the subject of *Work in Progress*, Pound continued to play a censorious role. He still beat the drums for *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*; but, in letters and conversation, he spoke of Joyce "in regress."

There were others who did not care for the new work. His books had always been assailed. It's a theme in *Finnegans Wake*. Lack of appreciation, lack of understanding, is what a Shem-like artist will necessarily suffer in a Shaun-like world. As for those who had been his admirers, Joyce was disappointed when they could not go along with him in his new adventure. Yet he could understand it if they felt the doubt he often felt himself. He could be gentle in the case of Harriet Weaver. In the case of Pound, he felt something stronger than dismay. He knew what Yeats had meant when he spoke of Pound as "A rugged and headstrong nature, and he is always hurting people's feelings."

Yet, in spite of all the slights, real or imagined, that he had received from Pound, Joyce could not forget that he had reason to be grateful. In 1932, when he was asked for a testimonial, he chose the words carefully. He could not praise Ezra Pound the writer; but he could write, "Nothing could be truer than to say that we all owe a great deal to him. . . . I most of all surely . . . it is possible that but for him I

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would still be the unknown drudge." In 1925, he had been asked for a similar tribute. "He has always been ready to give me advice and appreciation which I esteem very highly as coming from such brilliance and discernment." After *Work in Progress*, after the poem, he would not make this comment, but he still felt he owed "a debt of gratitude."

The word "wounderworker" shows both faces of his attitude. There are similar allusions. On p. 116, we find "an Esra" who is "unbluffingly blurtubruskblunt." It is easy to see a reference to Pound. Those who have done so have let it go at that. ("A reference to Ezra Pound.") Yet we may be sure that, Joyce being Joyce, the phrase was not composed to make the obvious remark that Ezra Pound is blunt. In conjunction with the phrases that come before and after, it offers many comments. To give one example, after "Esra," the text goes on to list a family of cats. This is a reference to *A Packet for Ezra Pound* where Yeats remembers how "taking out of his pocket bones and pieces of meat, (Pound) begins to call the cats. He knows all their histories. Yet now that I recall the scene I think that he has no affection for cats."

When the early chapters appeared in *transition*, Yeats had not yet written this memory of Pound. When Joyce read *A Packet*, he could see a chance of (partially) paying a score. But, like everything he put into the book, the allusion had to earn its keep. Before he could use it, Joyce had to work it into other aspects of his relationship to Pound.

"Esra" is a comment on the person it identifies. Ezra was a scribe—"the priest, the scribe of the laws of God in Heaven." In the passage on p. 116, we have the phrase "as singsing so Salaman." It is a reference to the Song of Songs. A distinction has been made between the Song of Solomon and the Book of Ezra.

Ezra is derived from a Hebrew word for help. In Ten—where the theme of Pound is most fully developed—Joyce uses "Ebenezer." This has the same root as Ezra. But the specific meaning is "the stone of help."

Maunderin

"A maunderin tongue in a pounderin jowl?" (p. 89) is a reference to Pound. Once again the writers who have noticed the allusion have let it go at that. Yet it is of little moment to say that Pound is a translator of Chinese. As a mandarin, he is a master of language, guardian of tradition. *To maunder* is to growl and grumble. ("Art is

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too loose!") Maundy is alms. *To maunder* is beg. He begs for others. He is a fund-raiser—an impersonal philanthropic worker. The word "pounderin" tells us that it deals with Pound: that he is abrasive. To pound is to bruise and batter. In addition to this usual sense, there is an increment—a sort of surplus value. Where Joyce is dancing—"on account of his joyicity"—a *pound* is a standard of specific gravity: a *pound* is a standard of money. To *pound* is to prison, to confine. *To pound* is to weigh coins—to ascertain that they meet a standard. A *pounder* tries to put—as Pound did with Joyce—a stamp, an imprint, on a crude ore.

Poposterous

Pound had said, "I am a bit more phallic, but less interested in excrement and feces." "I have a gallic preference for the Phallus . . . mittel europa humour runs to the other orifice." But we have noticed that, in his battle of Waterloo, Joyce is Napoleon. In the confrontation between the writer and his critic, he is identified with *le mot de Cambronne*. It is Shaun who does the German "brumming." All through the *Wake*, this "other orifice" in action is used as a symbol of the creative process. The anus and environs—the expanse of fat, the part used for sitting—is an aspect of Shaun.

There is a similar distinction between the phallus (tissue) and its activity. The dreamer is frequently represented by either of the organs. But, if we consider the two in conjunction, they are the opposing aspects of a Shaun-and-Shem polarity. Of these, the phallus is the appropriate symbol of vitality, the expressive symbol of regeneration. It is the more essentially involved with life, with love. It reflects the joy—"joyicity"—of creation. The phallus is a Shem: the anus is a Shaun.

One can think of an immediate objection. In the world of Shaun—the world as we know it—Shaun is to the fore. He is the façade. If we say that he is the posterior, there is a contradiction. The rear is in front.

That is the literal meaning of the word "preposterous." The "pro" is where the "post" should be.

On p. 153, the Mookse is sitting. He is the Church. And, by extension, the State, the Academy, any orthodoxy, any establishment. He is the letter: he administers the rules that fence in the spirit. In this passage, he is the one who sits. He is the stone, he is the bottom on which he sits. He is the act—the nonact—of sitting. Here Joyce uses a

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German nursery-word (one from mittel europa) to describe the way in which the Mookse sits. *Popo* is a euphemism one employs with children to represent the behind. The Mookse fills the space "quite poposterously."

If Shaun is anal, there is another discrepancy to reconcile. Not only did Pound insist that he was phallic. Joyce himself spoke of Shaun-Wellington-Pound as having—as being—a big "sexcaliber" telescope.

In the nonessentials, the telescope is phallic. In the way it looks, in the way it covers, the way it seems to dominate the field of battle, in the way it expands when it is going to be used. Yet there is nothing it creates.

A world of appearance. In spite of seeming activity, Shaun is immobile. Standing—or sitting—in his own space. By and large, the anus and environs are the seat of the critic. There are allusions to the "white harse of Wellington," "the wide harse of Wellington." On p. 552, Rebecca West, who said that Joyce has no taste, is described as sitting—a very Establishment Mookse—on an altar-stone. She is—she has—a "chilly bombom."

Back to "Esra." "Esra" and the contrast with the Song of Solomon. As we saw, the Song is associated with Joyce—a song of love, of joy, of gusto, of a phallic "Yes."

"Esra"—with an *s*—is the German form of Ezra. In the language in which the books were written, one reads from right to left. In the world of Shem, E-s-r-a ("Esra") is equivalent to a-r-s-e.

How Simple

I have mentioned that Pound was contemptuous about the poems Joyce had given him to read. He was pushing a more recent discovery—John Cheever Dunning. In a letter to Miss Weaver, Joyce admitted that his own verses (those of *Pomes Pennyeach*) were both old and poor; but he failed to understand why they should be thought inferior to the work of Dunning, which he considered "drivel." A few months later, he was still thinking of Pound and his protegé. Once again, in May 1927, he was writing to Miss Weaver. A leaky fountain pen caused a blot in the middle of a sentence. "Look at that!" he said. "It must be Pound did, I mean dun it." On p. 312—"from here Buvard to dear Picuchet. Blott." Plus a marginal comment. "Ensouling Female Sustains Agonizing Overman." This is a letter that Joyce is writing to Harriet Weaver. The

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word "Blott" suggests the French word for blotter, "Buvard:" which suggests Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pecuchet*: which brings up Ezra Pound who, in happier days, wrote *James Joyce et Pecuchet*, in praise of *Ulysses*. In itself, the allusion is not especially important. But it has a purpose. It reintroduces, no matter how faintly, the theme of rejection. Furthermore, it gives us notice that, in coming moments, it will be Ezra Pound, the wonder-wounder-worker, who takes the role of Kev.

"Cain was very wroth (with his brother), and his countenance fell." In Chapter Nine of *Finnegans Wake*, "each was wroth with his other. And his continence fell." "His" refers to Shem. Here in Chapter Ten it refers to Kev. "Kev was wreathed with his pother." The second half of the quotation will be found at the end of the next paragraph. Meanwhile, he gave Dolph a "blast through his pergaman hit him where he lived."

Pergamus was the citadel of Troy. It is a trope for head. Pergamum, a city in Asia Minor, gave its name to parchment. In the context, then, the word "pergaman" has two relevant meanings. Kev hit his brother in the head. Pound hit him in the manuscript. He "hit him where he lived."

Now the other half of the quotation: "And his countinghands rose." In this chapter, they are at their lessons, Shaun is Kev and Shaun is Dolph. In the room, a picture of two "wranglers" who are face to face—each a mirror-image of the other. Opposite and equal—like two capital F's. The short horizontal is a cocked fist; the long horizontal is the pugilist's extended arm. "Wrangler" has another meaning—honor student in mathematics. The themes are gathered. The hands he raises are the hands of the "wrangler." He is using them for counting. (A self-professed expert in currency and economics.) As a critic—he stands above the fallen boxer. (The one that he has battered.) His hand is counting. And—in Chapter Ten—it will go to "Ten."

There is a marginal comment. WITH EBONISER. The blow in the "pergaman" gave Dolph a black eye. (The "susu" who sang like Solomon is a sightless dolphin.) Moreover, it suggests—as we have also noticed—the name Ebenezer. The stone of Ezra. The stone of help.

A last item. All through *Finnegans Wake*, beginning with the first page, there are allusions to Tristan and Isolt. To the story and sometimes to the opera. "Mild und leise," the first words in the love-death aria are mentioned—and distorted—as early as p. 18. On p. 40, in the second chapter—there is a vagrant called Mildew Lisa—It is used again.

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In a one-line paragraph, Joyce refers to the love potion—the simple—and to these words in the *Liebestod*. He combines the theme with the theme of Pound—who for formal reasons, (or so Joyce would have it), rejected *Work in Progress*.

'There was a change. Joyce gives it a few words. He says "Formalisa." An allusion to Pound. An allusion to *Tristan*—It is followed by the words: Love's death. How simple!

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Jonathan Baumbach

THE KAEL BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS

It surprised me to discover that I had read all—not almost all but all—of the essay-reviews in this 478-page collection* which covers a three-year period of Pauline Kael's *New Yorker* film-going, when they originally appeared in those glistening pages. That's testimony of some sort—of curiosity and interest if not unequivocal admiration. Kael is mostly a pleasure on a week-to-week acquaintance, particularly on films toward which the reader is indifferent or tending toward her viewpoint. She writes with energy and wit, has retained a generous sympathy toward the new, is as sharp as any of her fellow assassins in needling the pretentious and inept. Yet these pieces, like most occasional journalism (movie reviewing is a subgenre of both journalism and show biz), don't survive rereading. The book as a whole, because of its inordinate length and the piecemeal quality of its judgments—there is no informing esthetic vision to sustain haphazard and eccentric particularities—seems overwrought and dated. Even the very best journalism beyond its moment can seem like old news.

Journalism is the operative word here. The pressures of deadline over an extended period of time lead inevitably to shortcuts of preconception and formula. Feature journalism—TV news coverage is the most blatant example—is concerned not with anatomizing an event but laying claim to its most newsworthy aspect and presenting that as if it were all. Kael does her own version of such benign distortion. She tends to take a facet of almost every film she reviews—a performance, an unsung scriptwriter, some barely related private obsession—and by elaborating on a marginal perception, gives it disproportionate implication. The event of the film is displaced by the performance of the reviewer. The most attractive movies to review are the ones that lend themselves to the most amusing and dramatic (and newsworthy) pieces. The medium, its own best subject, becomes a determining factor and consequently shapes and modifies standards.

*REELING. By Pauline Kael. Atlantic-Little Brown. $12.95.

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A reviewer can't be tentative in making judgments without undermining the prerogatives of what is essentially a self-assumed authority. Doubts are for the unannointed. Kael has a debater's style and zeal, a seemingly messianic assurance of the rightness of her immediate impressions. To make her pronouncements notable, she tends to flights of hyperbole, in competition with the devalued language of media hype. The films and performances that matter produce world records. Of Jeff Bridges, she writes: "He may be the most natural and least self-conscious screen actor who ever lived." Of *The Long Goodbye*: "It's probably the best American movie ever made that almost didn't open in New York." Of *The Godfather*: "The best gangster film ever made in this country." Of *Shampoo*: "The most virtuoso example of sophisticated kaleidoscopic farce that American moviemakers have ever come up with." Of *Mean Streets*: "[It] has a thicker textured rot and violence than we have ever had in an American movie, and a riper sense of evil." Of *The Godfather, Part II*: ". . . may be the most passionately felt epic ever made in this country." Of *Thieves Like Us*: ". . . so serious and lucid that it is as if William Faulkner and the young Jean Renoir had collaborated." There is something ingratiatingly loony in such rhetorical excess. And something sad as well. If no one is listening, says the private voice behind such prose, you have to scream to be heard.

I am unable to define the nature of the vision that informs these film essays—an uneasy admission when dealing with such overwhelming judgments. (The pieces add up, incidentally, to a kind of autobiography of a temperament.) Kael has high regard for the work of Robert Altman (*The Long Goodbye, Thieves Like Us* and *Nashville* but not *Images*), Francis Ford Coppola (*The Godfather*, I and II, *The Conversation*), Hal Ashby (*Shampoo* more than *The Last Detail*), Jan Troell (*The Emigrants* and *The New Land*), Bernardo Bertolucci (*Last Tango in Paris:* "a landmark in movie history"), Louis Malle (*Lacombe, Lucien*), Satyajit Ray (*Days and Nights in the Forest*), Martin Scorsese (*Mean Streets* and, with grudging reservations, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*), Woody Allen (*Sleeper*), Ingmar Bergman (though not particularly *Cries and Whispers*), Barbra Streisand (a long piece on the misuse of her in *Funny Lady*), Sam Peckinpah (not *The Getaway* however), Elaine May (*The Heartbreak Kid*) and Paul Mazursky ("Has there ever been another self-satirist like Mazursky—humanly understanding and utterly freaked out?").

On the other hand, Kael has little sympathy for the genre films of Don Siegel, for the middlebrow impersonality of George Roy Hill (*The*

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Sting and *Waldo Pepper*) for the cool elegances of Alain Resnais's *Stavisky* and Terrence Malick's *Badlands* (preferring to *Badlands* the trashy *Sugarland Express*, an odd though telling insistence), for the decadences of Visconti's *Ludwig* (though she is no fan of the great early works either), for the dry comedy of Tati's *Traffic* and more significantly, for the work of Chabrol (ignored in this volume) and Losey and Antonioni (although not reviewed here, cited as examples of style divorced from substance. Interestingly, years back when Kael was doing movie reviews over KPFA radio in Berkeley, she was one of the first American critics to herald *L'Avventura.*) On the evidence, Kael prefers the hot to the cool, gut experience to intellectual, subject matter to form; she is a moralist, has a liberal journalist's respect for important social content (is a sucker for good causes like *Serpico* and *Conrack* and *Sounder* and *State of Siege*), is wary of easy sentiment, is moved by the star turns of charismatic performers, gives more weight to the sound of a film (clever dialogue gets high marks) than its look, distrusts visual elegance (and beauty, one might add) almost as if it were a species of fraud, as if there were something decadent or anti-human in esthetic suasion.

Although reviewed on the front page of *The New York Times*—what stronger claim to a book's importance?—*Reeling* is essentially a non-book, a collection of occasional pieces (except for one longer more thoughtful essay on the culture) which have lost their occasion. Not many of the films reviewed here in the charged moment of their release, over-praised or damned or given even-handed justice, still seem worthy of the passion Kael invests in them. Even the much admired *Nashville* ("the funniest epic vision of America ever to reach the screen"), reviewed by Kael from a rough cut months before its release, seems less and less like a masterpiece, or even a significant work of art, as the impact of its immediacy diminishes. One concedes Altman's considerable talent. In a fallow time, he is arguably one of the two or three most interesting directors currently working in American cinema. His films, of which *Nashville* is the most obviously ambitious, have a characteristic and by now easily recognizable eccentricity, a manic off-beat rhythm that suggests nothing happening in a great hurry, a frenetic world caught unawares by a documentary camera. Controlled hysteria is the director's mode. The subliminal signs say, "the world is coming to an end," but what a painful good time it is getting there. *Nashville* is an exhilarating entertainment with self-insistent claims to larger importance—full of the kind of pretensions Kael would excoriate in a less sympathetic filmmaker.

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The self-advertised seriousness of *Nashville* is a commercial for a product still to be conceived. The Country-and-Western music capital is not so much a microcosm of America, as the film pretends to us (the assassination at the end is an egregious miscalculation), as an occasion for Altman to reinvent his vision of the culture—that is, to give it the look and feel of an Altman film. His actors write their own country and western material, better and worse than the real thing, though clearly inauthentic. The amplitude of *Nashville*—it has all the signposts of a big Hollywood film—has to do with its *Grand Hotel* narrative scheme. The multiplicity of character types and intersecting plots are held together through the device of a BBC interviewer who wanders through the film's landscape asking inane questions of the stars and whose fatuousness seems a parody merely of itself. *Nashville* is better than its worst, but its weaknesses are suggestive of Altman's weaknesses as a filmmaker. His crassness runs deep. The vision of American life that informs *Nashville* (and *California Split* and *M*A*S*H* and *The Long Goodbye*), though perhaps it is less a vision than a series of enlarged perceptions, is that there is no business but (and like) razzle dazzle Show Biz. It is a vision close enough to Kael's own for her to grant it almost everything.

Film reviewing, like most jobs, tends to justify its own importance by elevating the consequence of its occasion. Kael has a predilection for going farther in this direction than most, in part because she wants to command an audience for the movies that please her. She has a messianic view of her role that is sometimes attractive, sometimes maddening. She writes, for example, in her piece on *Day For Night*: "I ask for the extraordinary from films, while Truffaut, who finds moviemaking itself extraordinary, is often content to make films for everyday." Apart from the self-congratulation of this remark and the outright dumbness, one forgets for the moment that Truffaut makes films—some of them extraordinary—while Kael only writes about them. I single this remark out unfairly—it is not really characteristic—to indicate how self-infatuating reviewing can become when its subject evolves into the fine calibrations of one's own sensibility.

Popular culture tends to confuse reviewing with criticism, tends to make more of the seismographic responses of mostly intelligent laymen than such transient (and often arbitrary) judgments warrant. The movie reviewer, like the television newscaster, is susceptible of becoming a celebrity, more important by general consent than his nominal subject. The feature journalist is the prophet of the immediate, not so much ahead of fashion as no more than a half step behind.

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Kael tries hard to stay on top of things, but the old-fashioned moralist in her queers the act. For all her talk of "turn on" and "dig," all her with-it-ness, Kael's criteria for film art, when not improvised for the sake of justifying a particular judgment, seem to come out of some fifties high school textbook. All that talk of credibility and inhabiting a character and making us feel human emotions (as if there were other kinds available to us) seems inadequate to the sophistication of her perceptions. One suspects that she's not so much writing down to her audience (though that too), as giving her intuitive judgments some kind of academic respectability.

Although *Reeling* represents only about half of the films of more than routine interest released in the U.S. between 1972 and 1975—Kael does her *New Yorker* column six months out of the year—it is nevertheless a sad reminder of the thinness of the period. The older masters are dying off or out of work. Eccentric European films—the two dazzling Rivettes of the '75 New York Film Festival, for example—are no longer getting distributed here. There is no Godard reviewed in this collection, no Antonioni or Bresson (although *Four Nights of a Dreamer* had its quiet release in this period), no Ford or Hawks, no Chabrol or Losey, no Bellochio or Olmi, no Rossellini, no Hitchcock, no Welles, the last and least of De Sica, a minor Fellini, no Kurosawa or Ozu, a mixed bag of Truffauts. There is a masterwork by Bunuel, *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, which Kael admires though feels no need to overpraise (consequently, it seems in context less considerable than the super-kitsch of Altman and Coppola), and a wonderful Satyajit Ray film, *Days and Nights in the Forest*, which is the occasion here of Kael's most luminous and sensitive piece. The emergence of the work of Altman, Scorsese, and Coppola (and De Palma, Malick and Peckinpah), among the general run of inflated Hollywood trash (what a vulgar trifle *Shampoo* really is) seems insufficient compensation for what's been lost. Does Kael really think we've gone through a marvelous period of movies or is that the publicist in her hyping the talent in the room?

Kael says with characteristic inflation about the heroine of *Thieves Like Us*: "She seems to be herself on the screen in a way nobody has ever been before." With some minor adjustment, the remark holds true for Kael in the pages of *The New Yorker*. The remark—it has that kind of elasticity—also (with adjustment) holds true about the rest of us wherever. If *Reeling* is about anything, it is a book about vicarious world records that Kael and the rest of us share with the stars.

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BOOKS

MEDITERRANEAN MAN

EZRA POUND. By Donald Davie. New York. Viking Press. $7.95.

In the Autumn 1956 number of *The Hudson Review* Yvor Winters published a long essay called "Problems for the Modern Critic of Literature." In a section on epic poetry he referred to Ezra Pound:

> In our time we have had the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound, which may be an epic or not, according to your definition. The work has no narrative structure, such as that of *The Iliad*; it has no expository structure, such as that of *The Divine Comedy*. It thus avoids a variety of difficulties. There are a few loosely related themes running through the work, or at least there sometimes appear to be. The structure appears to be that of more or less free association, or progression through revery. Sensory perception replaces idea. Pound, early in his career, adopted the inversion derived from Locke by the associationists: since all ideas arise from sensory impressions, all ideas can be expressed in terms of sensory impressions. But of course they cannot be: when we attempt this method, what we get is sensory impressions alone, and we have no way of knowing whether we have had any ideas or not.

I have quoted the entire paragraph because Donald Davie's work in the critique of Pound, unless I have misunderstood it, has been an effort to find an answer to Winters, particularly to that last sentence in which Winters accused Pound of mistaking the eye for the mind. Davie took a first shot at Winters in *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* (1965), where he argued that Pound's arrangements of sensory impressions are designed to express "not 'ideas,' some of which admittedly cannot be expressed in this way, but rather a state of mind in which ideas as it were tremble on the edge of expression." What we get in Canto 17, for instance, "is not quite the idea of Venice held in the mind of the Venetian builder before he began to build; rather we have expressed the state of mind in the builder immediately before the idea crystallizes." Davie's argument, which seemed strong enough when I first read it, now seems insecure: "trembling on the edge of expression" is itself a trembling expression rather than a poised perception. I should have seen that Davie's

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argument could not hit Winters's target until it found the right words in which Davie could understand it. The case was not improved by Davie's switch from something trembling on the edge to something about to crystallize: the sentences show that he had only a vague notion of what he wanted to say. In 1965 Davie felt that Winters's charge could be met and its force deflected, but he did not command the right vocabulary or know where it could be found.

It is clear from Davie's little book on Pound in Frank Kermode's Modern Masters series that he has found the vocabulary he needs in Allen Upward's *The New Word* (1908), a book praised by Pound in *The New Age,* April 23, 1914. The crucial passage comes where Upward is examining the word *idea* and deciding that the Greek lexicon is lazy in saying merely that idea meant appearance:

> Even in Plato's time it had got further than that. Aquinas, who wrote in Latin and translates it by the Latin *forma,* explains *idea* as being the builder's plan of a not-yet-built house. Now my Dutch word-book renders 'idea' (as an English word) by *ontwerp,* which is to say, out-throw—that which the mind throws out, and not what it takes in. . . . The idea is not the appearance of a thing already there, but rather the imagination of a thing not yet there. It is not the look of a thing, it is a looking forward to a thing.

Davie quotes this passage and treats it as the source of two passages in Pound, Canto 74 ("Hast 'ou seen the rose in the steel dust") and a section of *Guide to Kulchur* in which Pound talks about "the *forma,* the immortal *concetto.*" The point is that Upward's *idea* is not a recipe or a blueprint: recipes and blueprints are the codes for perceptions already made a thousand times, they have only to be put into practice to embody a nature already known. They are the signs of old perceptions. To Upward, an idea is a gesture toward a future in which, given luck, the hunch may come to something, but for the moment it exists as a possibility, an heuristic vibration, a potentiality. Incidentally, Davie should have followed up Pound's hint in the word *concetto* because it evidently refers to Michelangelo's distinction between *concetto* and *immagine.* I take this information from Erwin Panofsky's great book *Idea,* published in German in 1924, Englished in 1968. "In its proper and literal sense, already formulated by St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas," Panofsky says, "*immagine* means that notion which *ex alio procedit,* that is, which reproduces an already existing object. *Concetto,* on the other hand, when it does not simply stand for 'thought,' 'concept,' or 'plan,' means the free, creative notion that constitutes its own object, so that it in turn can become the model for external

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shaping: as the Scholastics put it, the *forma agens*, not the *forma acta*." Thus, Panofsky says, "a smith shapes his beautiful handiwork according to the *buon concetto*, and God's thoughts which must be venerated and cherished in His 'works of art,' the countenances of beautiful human beings, are called *divin concetti*." Upward's notion of *idea* would support the distinction proposed by Kermode some years ago in *The Sense of an Ending* between fiction and myth. Myth was used as a term of rebuke because it referred to perceptions and motives so congealed from long, repetitive use that they no longer retain a breath of the imagination: anti-Semitism, for instance, is a myth. Fiction is a term of praise because it is something we know by, rather than something we act upon. We do not delude ourselves into thinking our fictions true, therefore we do not put them into practice; we merely use them as a form of imagination and knowledge. Fictions are good and pure because we keep them to the realm of possibility, within the parentheses of artistic form, they are that-which-is-not-yet, and that is their saving grace.

Why does it matter? Well, Davie has an interest in preventing the reader from taking Pound's *Cantos* as a sequence of versified ideas in the normal sense: conceptual slabs laid end to end, "ideas" about usury, anti-Semitism, good and bad government, and so forth. If we think of ideas in that sense, the *Cantos* are found to swarm with ideas, most of them deplorable. So long as we deal with the poem in that way, we find in it only fixities, myths in Kermode's sense, gross blocks of attitude and conviction. The point is that when Pound calls upon ideas as the appearances of things already there, his will usurps the rights of his imagination, and he becomes a politician. There are good fixities as well as bad fixities, but most of the fixities in the *Cantos* are bad, morally corrupt. Davie wants to make the reader sensitive to ideas in Upward's sense, the imagination of a thing not yet there. It is clear that Davie thinks the *Cantos* valuable only for that imagination, and that the malignant fixities are an embarrassment: he finds poetry in the *forma agens*, not the *forma acta*. The new book has a chapter on "Ideas in the *Cantos*," and another on "Rhythms in the *Cantos*." In fact, ideas and rhythms, in the sense sponsored by Upward, are virtually indistinguishable, or distinguishable only in theory. Rhythms are the movement of ideas. Ideas are recognized only in their movement; unlike anti-Semitism, they do not lie congealed on the page. *Motif* is the word Davie uses to show the movement of ideas in practice throughout the poem: this enables him to say that "the catching up and echoing—over intervals of sometimes many hundred verse lines, sometimes only a few

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score—of a *motif* like Jonson's "Have you seen. . . ?" or "Have you marked. . . ?" constitutes one of the large-scale rhythms that ride through the *Cantos* in our experience of them when we read many of them at a time, and fast." This is how the *Cantos* should be read, according to Davie, and the best preparation for reading the poem is to train the ear to respond to motifs, cadences, rhythms. Davie hopes to rid the poem of its offensive matter by alerting its readers to the true poetry of motif, idiom, *concetto.* Pound's true imagination makes fictions as a composer makes rhythms and motifs; his false imagination resorts to what other, lesser men have made for purposes mainly impure.

It would be easy to say that Davie's argument is ingenious, and to damn it in that praise. Obviously he wants to redeem a poem which, in many of its manifestations, he thinks beyond redemption. He is embarrassed by those pages in which Pound's suburban vulgarity pretends to be the highest refinement of manners. But he loves the poem and wants to save it from its vulgarity. Hence his recourse to Upward, to transfer the prestige of ideas to acts of the mind which make their presence felt long before they have achieved the good or bad fate of fixity. In the chapter on rhythms in the *Cantos* Davie shows how motifs work. He takes Ben Jonson's poem, "Her Triumph," one of the lyrics from *A Celebration of Charis* ("Have you seen but a bright lily grow?") and attends to its presence in Cantos 47, 74, 80, 81, and 110. The demonstration is beautiful, a true critical perception, mind-work in tune with ear-work. We hear the motif as it comes and goes through the later *Cantos.* But Davie has not shown why such events are important, or what value we should ascribe to them. I cannot see, therefore, how his argument differs from the common advice of those who tell us to attend to the sounds of the *Cantos* and ignore the sense. I deliberately put the case crudely: in a statelier version we would be advised to find Pound's poetry not in his opinions, convictions, and political sentiments but in his craft, his intermittently released sensibility, the music of his verse. Davie's new vocabulary seems to me to make essentially the same case, but in much more impressive philosophic terms.

Music: in *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* we read a great deal about sculpture, sculptural form, and so forth, and the presiding book was Adrian Stokes's *The Stones of Rimini* (1934). The new book has nothing to say of those matters; Upward has displaced Stokes; music has replaced sculpture. There is no talk of Brancusi, Gaudier-Brzeska, the form emerging from its matrix, the distinction between carving and

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modeling. In the earlier book *The Stones of Rimini* was deemed "perhaps indispensable" as a commentary on the *Cantos*: now it is dispensable, not mentioned at all. Perhaps this only means that the new book should be read as marking the present moment in Davie's relation to Pound, a relation which has waxed and waned, altered its emphases, changed its mind. Davie's critiques of *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* make the point. He first wrote about the poem in 1961, changed his mind about it in *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* and has now lost interest in it altogether, if my ear has picked up the vibration of his prose accurately. He now disowns the first critique entirely. I mention this case not to say that Davie cannot make up his mind about Pound, but to suggest that the relation between his mind and its objects is topical and provisional rather than definitive: there is a difference between the two statements. What is edifying in Davie's critical books is the impression of a mind in the process of engaging itself with its objects. It would not be difficult to show that many of his arguments are mutually incompatible: as a poet he has never known whether he wanted to be like Samuel Johnson or like Rimbaud; as a critic he has been vivid rather than consistent. His current Pound is a musician rather than a sculptor, specifically an Edwardian troubadour, a conservative man of letters, a Mediterranean man, an American who made himself a European for love of the Romance languages and the songs of their literatures. But we may not have heard the end of Davie's story yet.

A few details, to finish with. Davie has a wonderful passage about Pound's reading of Laforgue and Corbière and Rimbaud, making the point that "what Pound admired in these Frenchmen was what he admired also in Crabbe—the naming of quotidian or ignoble objects with an accuracy that depended on purging from the mind any sense of the associations that had accrued to them: just that purged accuracy was what constituted *le mot juste*, whether in verse or prose." I think the point applies to modern American poets generally. I took part some weeks ago in a seminar with Hugh Kenner in Dublin: our text was Marianne Moore's poem "Virginia Britannia," and we agreed that Miss Moore often deprives a word of its history and associations so that she can improve its mobility. This is an American rather than an English procedure. A final note about *Mauberley*: Davie says that when Pound wrote of "conservation of the 'better tradition'" and put the last two words in quotation marks he baffled many commentators "who assumed that when they detected two traditions at work in a given period, they were in duty bound to decide which is 'the better'; to

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decide, for instance, that in the English seventeenth century the 'better tradition' is illustrated by Donne and Herbert and Marvell, not by Campion or Dowland, Lovelace or Waller." A few years ago I published a note in *Notes and Queries* to show that the phrase is given in quotation marks because it is a quotation from *The Awkward Age*, a novel in which Pound was inordinately interested. The ripple of irony which the phrase causes in *Mauberley* starts from a passage in Chapter two of James's novel where Vanderbank is talking to Mr. Longdon. Vanderbank has remarked of Mrs. Brookenham that for the past year or two she has been giving her daughter's age as sixteen. Longdon rebukes him mildly for the insinuation that Mrs. Brookenham has been doing this in her own behalf. Vanderbank answers:

> It was nasty my doing that? I see, I see. Yes, yes: I rather gave her away, and you're struck by it—as is most delightful you *should* be—because you're, in every way, of a better tradition and, knowing Mrs. Brookenham's my friend, can't conceive of one's playing on a friend a trick so vulgar and odious.

Davie takes Pound as mocking the kind of discrimination which makes a pretentiously strict preference for one tradition rather than another. It is in keeping with Davie's current critique that he should enforce this point; so that he can then ascribe to Pound a concern for Tradition "as rhythm working through history" in the same way as several motifs work through the *Cantos*: all the traditions are precious, he says, they do not compete. I think the argument would be greatly enriched, though not necessarily settled once for all, by recourse not merely to a blunt preference for one tradition rather than another but to the Jamesian nuances of feeling which pass between Vanderbank and Longdon and to the moral and aesthetic responsibilities implied in such encounters.

DENIS DONOGHUE

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MYTH OF THE PRIMITIVE

THE PEYOTE DANCE by Antonin Artaud. Translated by Helen Weaver. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976. $7.95.

"There where others propose works, I claim nothing more than to reveal my mind." With these words Antonin Artaud began his second book, *L'Ombilic des Limbes,* published in 1925. He was beginning, too, a scriptorial trajectory that was to challenge not only the assumptions of Western theater, *le théâtre digestif* as he called it, but the problematic of language itself—a language through which, inevitably condemned, he had yet to seek liberation. Artaud was doomed, despite his foray into surrealism, his theatrical iconoclasm (now, perversely, mainstream avant garde), his experimentation with the hallucinogenic rituals of the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico, the ostensible subject of *The Peyote Dance,* his *protestations verbales contre le verbe,* his pleas for a material, corporeal language, his pun-beleaguered poetry, despite even his madness. The unconscious, Lacan reminds us aphoristically, is the discourse of the Other.

Artaud did not then, at the age of twenty-nine, conceive of his oeuvres as detached from life.

> Each of my works, each of the sketches of myself, each of the icey blossomings of my inner soul drools over me.

Artaud, in fact, could never permit himself the luxury of the genitive. The "of," better still the "*de*" with its ablative connotations, remained always a copulative which he had either to accept totally, accepting thereby his martyrdom, or to reject totally, rejecting thereby his mind, his spirit, his *esprit.* "Nor do I conceive of the mind as detached from myself," he wrote in *L'Ombilic.* A year earlier, in a letter to Rivière, he complained:

> I suffer from a frightening disease of the mind. My thought abandons me at all levels. From the simple fact of the thought to the external fact of its materialization in words. Words, sentence forms, interior thought directions, simple reactions of the mind, I am in constant pursuit of my intellectual being. When then I can grasp a form, however imperfect, I fix it, in the fear of losing the entire thought. It is beneath me, I know, I suffer from it, but I agree to it in the fear of not dying altogether.

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It was this constant pursuit of his intellectual being, this attempt to undo the primordial self-alienating experience of language that motivated Artaud's work and provoked its harrowing images. Just as the mind, through the word, is detached from itself (whatever the authorial protest) so, too, life as the subject of representation, theatrical or other, is detached from itself—an illusion, a creation even, of such (verbal) representation. One can say that in Artaud's vision what is represented has never been presented. Artaud, who was a passionate man, sought escape in the surrealist dream of that other reality, in the "metaphysical" theater of the Orient, in his own theater of cruelty, and in the supposedly self-transcending rituals of the primitive.

Artaud left for Mexico in the winter of 1936, disappointed and bitter. His second theatrical venture, *Les Cenci*, had been a failure. "Because I kept seeing around me men lying, lying about the source of ideas, idiotically refusing to advance as far as ideas, I felt the need to leave mankind and go away to a place where I could at least freely advance my heart. . . ." In Mexico, Artaud hoped to find a civilization where the metaphysical values he tried to put on stage were still alive. "I have come to Mexico to make contact with the Red Earth." The primitive afforded him, as so many others, the possibility of a Romantic quest which he might otherwise have found embarrasing. He had, of course, been fascinated by Mexico for years. He lectured at the University and lived with the Tarahumara from the end of August to the beginning of October. He returned to France, flirted briefly with normal bourgeois life, and then suffered progressive estrangement, delusional thinking, and paranoia that resulted in his arrest and hospitalization in LeHavre in 1937. (He was on his way back from Ireland where he had hoped to meet the Druids and to return a cane he thought had belonged to St. Patrick.) A year later his most influential book, *Le Théâtre et son Double*, was published.

The Peyote Dance is a collection of essays, postscripts, supplements, letters, a poem, and notes that Artaud wrote about his Mexican trip and his experience with peyote. They were written over a period of ten years, most of which Artaud spent in insane asylums. They blend, if not always explicitly, the two encounters. In "The Peyote Rite," for example, Artaud moves from a description of his experience with peyote to his belief (confirmed in the works of ancient Chinese) that the liver is "the organic filter of the Unconscious," to the effect of incarceration, hunger, and electroshock therapy on him. "And I could not face each new treatment without dispair, for I knew that once again I would lose consciousness and that for one whole day I would be

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gasping for air inside myself, unable to find myself, knowing perfectly well that I was somewhere but the devil knew where, as if I were dead." He writes four years later in a postscript to this essay that it

> represents my first effort to return to myself after seven years of estrangement and total castration. In it a recent victim of poisoning, sequestered and traumatized, recalls what happened before his death. This explains why the text can do no more than stammer.

He adds—in what must be taken as more than sensationalist rhetoric—that it was written "in the dulled mental state of a convert whom the magical spells of the priestly rabble, taking advantage of his momentary weakness, were keeping in a state of enslavement." Thirteen days later, in a continuation of the postscript, he claims to have between 150 and 200 hosts in him. Nothing appears "more erotically pornographic than Christ, ignoble sexual materialization of all false psychic enigmas. . . ." It was this state of conversion, Artaud maintains, that accounted for his "delirium" on the subject of Christ and the cross in the essay. There is continual movement—shifts in perspective, in lucidity, in mental disposition—in the essays.

The Peyote Dance, in its contorted and involuted totality, comes (unwittingly I suspect) as close to Artaud's ideal discourse as anything he wrote. It is, despite its ostensible subject, its own subject. It is an encounter, created and recreated, distorted and corrected, symbolized and resymbolized, discussed and digested, though never fully. It cannot be read as an ethnographic text (though some pedestrian anthropologists have tried to do so), as a psychiatric history, an adventure story, or a spiritual quest. This is its fascination. Artaud came as close to achieving *here*, in his text, what he sought *there*, among the Tarahumara.

Though planned in his life time, *The Peyote Dance* was not published until 1955—eight years after his death. Now comes the Farrar, Straus and Giroux translation which, with the exception of a few banalities on the dust jacket, abandons the work to its readers without an introduction, an epilogue, a chronology, or a justification for the order of the selections—all essential to appreciate the development of Artaud's response to his encounter with the Tarahumara. My French edition, which reflects Artaud's wishes concerning this order, is significantly different. Artaud would probably have been pleased with his American achievement, were it not that it hangs on the commercial force of "peyote" and "Artaud."

Artaud is, nevertheless, subject to language—to the myth of the

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primitive, of his thought and words, through which the Westerner defines himself. Were Artaud not cognizant of this—and at times he appears not to be—it would be simple enough to dismiss *The Peyote Dance* as the work of yet another armchair philosopher of the primitive who insists that *his* myth is *their* reality. Artaud's stance is considerably more complicated. In one essay he declares that had he not met the Tarahumara, whom, he claims, believe themselves to be a Primeval Race, he would have thought "a primeval race" to be nothing more than a myth. More often, the source of his perception is left open. In "The Mountain of the Signs," one of the most impressive essays, Artaud describes the signs, forms, and natural effigies he sees on the Tarahumara mountains: a naked man, tortured, nailed to a rock, and worked on by forms which the sun made volatile; an enormous statue of Death with an infant in its hands; a woman's bosom with perfectly delineated breasts; an animal carrying in its own jaws its effigy which it devoured. He seems "to read everywhere a story of childbirth in war, a story of genesis and chaos. . . ." He remarks: "Between the mountain and myself, I cannot say which was haunted. . . ." He writes in another essay:

> For anyone who pursues the mental side of things with his heart, there is a point, as in the Peyote rite of the Tarahumara, when the fabric of perception opens in a cross, and cracks in such a way that one no longer knows whether it is from one's own heart that this cross has emerged, or from the head of the Other, who then is no longer the Other, any Other, but THAT ONE, the Only Source of Flames, whose tongue pierces and gathers the taste for the Word, when the heart which was beating like a Double, recognizes its GENERATOR.

Subject and object are blended in the image, which has for Artaud the power of bringing one closer to a hidden reality. "Whatever belongs to the realm of the image," Artaud wrote in his Surrealist days, "cannot be subjected to reason; it must remain within this realm, or be annihilated." Of course, Artaud attempts in *The Peyote Dance* (as in some of his writings on the Theater of Cruelty) just such an annihilation. Some of the most painfully tedious pages of *The Peyote Dance* are his translations of images into (verbally meaningful) signs.

Artaud could not escape his own personal mythology either; it is carried in his images. Images of castration, mutilation, sexual antagonism, purity, pollution, and bewitchment, of Christ and the cross, as well as grander philosophic, linguistic, and esthetic themes, that characterize Artaud's writings, are attributed to the Tarahumara.

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Despite some extraordinary descriptions of the peyote rites and his own experience of peyote, the book is impersonal, aloof, and distant. The Indians do not come alive; they remain always icons within Artaud's personal mythology. *The Peyote Dance* is very much the work of a lonely man—a man tormented by an inability either to detach himself from experience or to accept it wholely. It is, in its way, a record of Artaud's martyrdom.

When Artaud writes, for example, at the beginning of the first essay (in the American edition) "incredible as it may seem, the Tarahumara Indians live as though they were already dead," we are at first tempted to read this as an extravagant image that is somehow descriptive of the Indians. By the end of the essay—it is only six pages long—we know it is Artaud speaking of himself, of the mummy (Artaud le Momo) dead and yet paradoxically preserved as alive. Death for Artaud, we must remember, is a means "to regain the emptiness of a crystalline liberty." It is a liberation from life—life which, in a meditation on suicide, he describes as "a consenting to the apparent readability of things and their relationship to the mind." The image of man, neither alive nor dead, the mummy, god even (Artaud had such delusions) mutilated, castrated, martyred, Christ, Osiris, Adonis, appears in ritual splendour at the end of "Tutuguri." The poem was written two weeks before Artaud's death of rectal cancer on March 4, 1948.

> there, the advancing horse bears the torso of a man,
> a naked man who holds aloft
> not a cross,
> but a staff of ironwood
> attached to a giant horseshoe
> that encircles his whole body,
> his body cut with a slash of blood,
> and the horseshoe is there
> like the jaws of an iron collar
> which the man has caught
> in the slash of blood.

Artaud explains in a letter to his publisher Marc Barbizat that "The new Tutuguri that I am writing for you is heavy with a blood experience which I did not have in 1936. This blood experience is that I had here three attacks in which I was found bathing in my blood, in an entire sea of blood, and Tutuguri comes out of this."

VINCENT CRAPANZANO

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ILLUSION AND REALITY

PARTIAL MAGIC: THE NOVEL AS A SELF-CONSCIOUS GENRE. By Robert Alter. University of California Press. $10.00.

Johnson's *Dictionary* defines a novel as "a small tale, generally of love." Johnson distinguished it from the "romance," and his practice and taste reflect even wider tolerance: his own *Rasselas* is a philosophical Oriental tale, and he praised the epistolary novels of Richardson, though he admitted anyone who read *Clarissa* for the plot would hang himself in frustration. The distinction of "novel" from "romance" became programmatic in Sir Walter Scott's practice, and from him passed into American fiction, explicitly down to Melville, implicitly beyond. Even Jane Austen, most polished practitioner of the "novel" in Johnson's strict sense, made the hero in *Northanger Abbey* a great reader of Gothic romances, and Austen asserted her own form not as better, but as more suited to a certain level of English reality. Only rather recently did the term "novel" spread imperialistically to cover any long prose fiction. And by an unhappy paradox, some critics shrank prose fiction to fit within the prescriptive confines of the novel, until F. R. Leavis's disastrously narrow *The Great Tradition* (1948) could attempt to judge all English fiction by the standard of discursive exposition in the service of providing, in Alter's phrase, "intent verisimilar representations of moral situations in their social context."

Alter's aim in this sane and thoughtful book is to rescue the novel from such narrow preconceptions. He intends instead a pluralist approach to this "capacious" genre. Returning to Cervantes, Alter argues that the novel arose in a time of doubt about the nature of reality. Its form confronts a radical skepticism and so constantly conducts a "critical exploration through technical manipulation of the very form that purports to represent reality." Cervantes already shows the full range of these "technical manipulations," among them, doubled characters, explicit recognition that there are many possible ways to represent reality, and fusion of criticism with creation in parody and in comments by narrator and characters on fictional forms and their rules. The reader does not get an illusion of reality, but

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instead shares with the author a constant testing of both fiction and reality. The novel's true subject, then, is "the disparity between the structures of the imagination and things as they are." By maintaining dialectical interplay between fiction and reality, the novel heightens critical consciousness and thus keeps us from reifying the complex energies of life into frozen logical or moral categories. Dickens and the other nineteenth-century realists mistake their fictions for literal truth, replacing "dialectical self-confrontation" with wish-fulfilment. Their "realism" is a psychic defense against chaotic or threatening reality, an attempt to dominate reality illegitimately by believing literally in an invented fantasy. Alter virtually reproves Dickens and Balzac for a lack of imaginative courage: "realism" alienates the human freedom of imagination.

But "realism" returns to haunt Alter like a guilty conscience. Imagination, he notes, can be the instrument of freedom or the snare of delusion. To restrain this pleasure principle, Alter relocates the tension between fiction and reality within the narrator's and character's consciousness of experience. He seems to agree with the view he attributes to Sterne, that our experience is mediated by our own mind, which is in turn shaped by our culture. "Reality" is a cultural and mental institution, subject to historical variation. Alter finds "an experiential realism in Sterne, a metaphysical realism in Diderot, an epistemological realism in Cervantes, and (one might add) a moral-intellectual realism in Fielding." The exact definition of these distinctions matters less than their variety: beside them nineteenth-century "realism" is just one more, in fact a bad faith variety.

Artifice, then, must serve a "purpose"; self-conscious artifice becomes a super-mimesis, the representation not of ordinary reality, but of the "spiritual condition of mankind." Imaginative play finds its limit in "existential realism," the recognition that Death, the Absolute Master, sets limits to the possibilities of human freedom. The infinity of imagination plays dialectically off the finitude of narrative form, so that the novel can represent the tension between the coherence of artifice and the death and disorder outside artifice. We should be concerned, Alter says, with death in the novel, not the death of the novel. Alter has not lined up these terms with much philosophic rigor, to be sure: imagination is both the source of coherent form and of the infinite freedom that transcends fixed form; death sets limits and yet is grouped with disorder. But Alter's intent is clear: to justify imagination by claiming for it existential seriousness. Thus, Nabokov is supreme among modern novelists because his artifice is no mere

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authorial whim, but a way of representing the tension between triumphant imagination and limited human existence. His is a game of worlds, not of words.

To condense Alter's argument does a certain injustice to the book's texture. With extraordinary tact he chooses telling examples and passages to analyze. And he is a master of a kind of indirect critical style. A reader can only admire how smoothly he moves up a nicely graded scale from precise stylistic analysis to observations on the economy of a whole work to divination of the author's governing sense of human experience. There Alter stops, allowing the authors to speak his theses for him, so that his argument suffuses the book like a sensibility. In fact, that argument is already complete in Lukacs's *Theory of the Novel* (1916). Alter does not mention Lukacs, not, certainly, out of ignorance, but doubtless out of a justified unwillingness to bog down the general reader in the quagmires of Lukacs's Hegelian prose. I will not repeat Lukacs's criticism of his own argument, available in the preface to the English translation. And I find Alter's analyses shrewd and illuminating. I welcome his hints about socio-historical context—intermittent and aphoristic, to be sure, but dazzlingly accurate. I feel swept up by his eloquent and vigorous defense of imagination's claim to the higher, paradoxical truth of existential realism. At his best, Alter reminds one of Auerbach. But what disturbs me in the book is its inability to escape the ghost of Leavis—to escape what is modishly but accurately called his "problematic."

Like Leavis, Alter feels obliged to give the term "novel" some essential substance or content. It matters relatively little for the structure of the argument whether that essence is "realism" or "imagination." In fact, one turns dialectically into the other. What can possibly be the source of the critic's strange compulsion to play policeman for a concept? The other side of this compulsion is to make the definition prescriptive, to evaluate novels and defend "the novel." Alter begins by aiming at pluralism and tolerance, but ends up unfair to the nineteenth century in order to rehabilitate the ancients and moderns: Cervantes's and Nabokov's gain is Balzac's loss. And "imagination" must dissolve into "existential realism" because the step is so short from there to "seriousness." But why should the playfulness of literature provoke these gymnastic feats of dialectic to uncover a "higher" seriousness? The problem, as Heidegger argues, is our domination by a particular way of thinking about "truth." Since Plato, "Western man" thinks of truth as correctness in representing things according to

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"ideas," and he esteems everything real according to "values." Alter seems inescapably driven to find the "idea" of the novel and then to weigh novels according to a "value." His book is so good, so rich in modest and lucid intelligence, that it compels me to wonder whether we ever can escape a metaphysical and "humanist" way of thinking about truth. Perhaps we can't—or shouldn't. It may be, as Leavis thinks, that the critic's task is to define and judge. But perhaps his real task is to let the work live in and through an act of understanding. And Alter's true and very considerable merit, I think, lies not in his "ideas," but in the fact that he so often and so fully accomplishes that task.

DONALD MARSHALL

THE WRITER AS AMERICA

THE PURITAN ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN SELF. By Sacvan Bercovitch. Yale University Press. $15.00.

We may be nearing the end of something in the study of American literature. The fifties and sixties gave rise to an astonishing body of criticism concerned with what is distinctively American about American writing. The question itself had interesting cultural and political origins in the postwar years, and was not the property of any exclusive ideology. Underlying the work of figures as diverse in literary and social outlook as Perry Miller, Marius Bewley, Richard Chase, Henry Nash Smith, R.W.B. Lewis, Roy Harvey Pearce, Leslie Fiedler, Charles Feidelson, Leo Marx, and Richard Poirier ran a common premise that the classic writers shared discoverable "American" characteristics, and that, once discovered, these characteristics would reveal the culture itself. The term "American" provided the major, if not always acknowledged, problematic of the criticism. And the centrality of the literature to the culture was taken for granted.

The roots of this critical outburst would be rewarding to study in their own right, and before long someone is likely to undertake that

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project. Sacvan Bercovitch's *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, while representing a new generation of criticism, casts a certain light, oblique but illuminating, on the earlier interpretations, particularly on the status of the question, "What is 'American'?" The asking of the question entails the study of a relationship between literary text and historical situation, but in the past that presupposition did not always lead to the next step, of actually grounding the literary text within a historical matrix. The criticism of American writing, while notably ardent in its historical-mindedness and its quest for cultural generalization, has not been notably historical in its procedures. Often the history taken for granted by critics has been a history extrapolated from literature. As Quentin Anderson has put it, literary works have been readily "substituted for the American past by literary critics." Someone asserted recently that Emerson is American culture in the nineteenth-century—a statement few critics are likely to protest, or even notice as unusual. Most historians would throw up their hands. The disparity between the views of nineteenth-century society held by literary critics and by social historians threatens, in fact, to cripple the whole enterprise of studying the American past.

Of course in certain moods Emerson might well have agreed with the critics. And this uncomfortable thought points to one of the difficulties American criticism has yet to solve. I refer to the peculiarly self-aggrandizing way writers have related to and identified with America—not to America as social fact alone, but as idea and ideal. This latter relationship and its solipsistic implications is the major subject of *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, a brave and brilliant book in that it makes explicit what has been the buried theme of much of the criticism of the previous two decades. But it is also a troubling book in so far as it accepts the centrality of that theme uncritically. The book is both troubling and revealing in other ways as well, but let me say at once that it is the most significant and far-reaching contribution to the theory of American literature in recent years. I am not at all certain that Bercovitch has taken a turn in a new direction, but it seems clear to me that his argument brings into sight the outer limits, let us say the impasse, of the main currents of American criticism in the recent past.

This is not to say that the book takes its bearings in any overt way from the major critical tradition. The mode (as distinct from the implicit theme of "Americanness") of the tradition has been predominantly dialectical: from Van Wyck Brooks, D.H. Lawrence, V.L. Parrington, and F.O. Matthiessen to Miller, Chase, Lewis, Feidelson,

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and Marx, the method of interpretation has stressed tensions, dualisms, antinomies. Novel and romance, nature and society, hope and memory, mind and world, myth and experience, industrial and pastoral: these have been the embracing terms of the typical dialectics perceived at the heart of the literature. Bercovitch also employs a dialectical mode, but he virtually ignores the familiar terms in favor of a very unfamiliar terminology of rhetorical or figurative analysis, and subordinates dialectics, somewhat in the manner of the Puritan writers on whom he bases his argument, for the construction of a holistic design. The design is adumbrated in the concluding chapter as "the myth of America." The process of construction, which takes up the bulk of the book, is a lavishly detailed and meticulous argument concerning Puritan hermeneutics, that is, the way in which the seventeenth-century New England orthodoxy read and wrote its texts. An ingenious construction itself, virtually an imitation in form of the structure of thought it elucidates, the book proceeds from a consideration of a single text from Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*, or rather the conjunction in the title of Mather's brief life of John Winthrop of two terms: Nehemias Americanus (the American Nehemiah). With awesome erudition and unmistakable authority, Bercovitch displays his own remarkable hermeneutical powers in demonstrating that the yoked-together words are pregnant with a "comprehensive historical design" of "astonishing breadth and coherence."

Apart from Perry Miller's intellectual histories, none of the critics in the recent past has thought to locate the origins of a unique Americanness in the generally forbidding literature of tracts and sermons and histories of seventeenth-century New England; an exception is Charles Feidelson, who devotes a good part of one chapter in *Symbolism and American Literature* (1953) to the background of the American symbolist tradition in Puritan methodology. In this sense and in several others, Bercovitch's work most resembles Feidelson's. Both are concerned with the development of an intellectual method from Puritanism to romanticism, and both are concerned with a kind of self-consciousness and intellectualism that seems a special mark of the Puritan bequest to American literary culture. Although they differ in other quite fundamental ways which it would be inappropriate to raise here, the most notable difference lies in their subject matter: Feidelson is concerned with concepts and procedures of art, while Bercovitch, more sweeping in the field he commands, investigates the centrality of a unique idea of America itself. The uniqueness of his own enterprise, and this is not the least of what is praiseworthy about

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his book, lies in his assimilation of colonial New England writing to the main tradition of classic American writing. While the details of his argument might provoke controversy, and while he may, as I think he does, overstate the case for the persistence of the New England influence throughout American culture, there is no question that his elucidation of a significant literary imagination in Puritan writing is a remarkable feat, undertaken with great skill, subtlety, and insight.

Toward the implicit design of Nehemias Americanus, Bercovitch has two intentions: to show how Mather arrived at such an imaginative feat of compression and coherence, and then, by asking "What is *American* about the rhetorical and conceptual design of 'Nehemias Americanus'?" to show not only that the *Magnalia* "embodies a vision that remains one of the most powerful unifying elements of the culture," but also that "amazingly, the future proved them (Mather and the Puritans) right" in their invention of "the redemptive meaning of America." The book, then, argues along several fronts. It hoists Mather and the Puritans to the front rank of American imaginative writers, as the inventors of "a distinctive symbolic mode"; it hoists writing itself to a foremost position as a determining historical force; it lays claim to a Puritan basis for American romantic writing, which is as much as to say all subsequent writing of any significance; and it claims that the inner substance, the essential content of all significant American writing is (virtually by definition) America itself—that is, America as an idea of selfhood, or the writer himself as America.

The claims are as stunning as they are extravagant. Bercovitch has grasped a certain element of Puritan thinking and writing that seems to have eluded earlier commentators, especially Perry Miller, whose magisterial works on "The Puritan Mind" the present book takes as its hidden antagonist. He has discovered that the founders of Massachusetts Bay Colony were compelled by their need to justify their peculiar enterprise of taking the Reformation overseas to modify the terms and modes of Reformation rhetoric. The necessity derived from the fact that for the first time in the history of the Reformation, a place of settlement could be plausibly imagined as an authentic—not merely metaphoric—Promised Land. This uniqueness of the New England venture—the effort to plant a genuine theocracy, a "city upon a hill" that would carry forward and fulfill the work of redemption—generated tensions within the inherited modes of exegesis, particularly those concerning the meanings of self, history, and nation. The inherited modes were methods of transformation, of reading out the meanings of one text (the Old Testament) by reference to another (the

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New Testament), and interpreting secular or providential history in the light of sacred or soteriological history as embodied in the New Testament. In order to deal with the uniqueness of their enterprise, represented by the very word America, the Puritans inverted the traditional modes of interpretation. Hermeneutics gave way to symbolism. While Bercovitch's use of "symbolism" remains a bit cloudy—he clearly does not mean the elaborate process of perception and creation of meaning which is Feidelson's subject—he seems to mean at least the arbitrary invention of meaning. The inversion of hermeneutics refers to the displacement of the authority of scripture by the authority of a secular place and a secular history named America. To serve this novel role generated by a necessity novel in Protestantism, secular America had to be transformed into a sacred text, without losing its status as secular history. In the English tradition, for example, providential or secular history was available for interpretation only by reference to the sacred book; in New England, the place itself became a sacred book.

This process of inversion, as Bercovitch details it, was neither as simple nor as wholly arbitrary as my account suggests. America's sacred-secular history developed through a complex process of interpretation and typological reading. The concept of America as a fulfillment, as the very figure of (rather than simply the setting for) redemption, implied a unique blending of the three major Protestant perspectives of self, history, and nation. With the hermeneutical inversion the perspectives were virtually interchangeable. This blending and unifying of perspectives made itself available only to those who perceived the momentous shift of meaning from scripture to secular history, from Bible to America, that is, only for symbolists. Such readers were then qualified to proclaim themselves not merely Americans, but America itself. This radically subjective perception, sanctioned by the hermeneutical inversion, provided the basis and the method for a new idea of corporate selfhood, an identification of self as consisting of place, history, and individual being. Real history transforms itself into sacred history, then, through a process of symbolic reading, a process which is at its heart, Bercovitch indicates, an imaginative assertion.

My summary hardly does justice to the complexity and elegance of the argument. Bercovitch is describing an elusive intellectual change of great importance for the study of one major current in American cultural life. I have my doubts that the book will set off a Cotton Mather revival—Bercovitch on Mather is far more gripping than Mather on Winthrop. But as a transmitter of a highly charged cultural

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formation, the crotchety Puritan takes on new interest. Composing his masterwork in the dying days of the orthodoxy, feeling himself isolated, deprived by history of the centrality enjoyed by his grandfather, John Cotton (the analogy with Henry Adams cannot be missed), Mather was literally jolted into a new mode of self-perception based on a "reordering of rhetorical forms." In his extremity—only more extreme by degrees from the predicament of his forebears in the first generation of clergymen—Mather takes America for his sacred text and reads out a miraculous history. He fuses the self (his own and that of the heroes of the *Magnalia*) and the nation into an imaginative construct in which the identification of self with nation is equivalent in power to that between self and Christ in the traditional *imitatio Christi*. Thus, writes Bercovitch, "To be an American is to assume a prophetic identity; to have been an American is to offer a completed action that makes destiny manifest."

"To be an American" is obviously no ordinary citizenship. It is to partake in prophecy, in sacred destiny—in effect, after Mather, to be that destiny in your own historical and natural person, a living emblem of the "conjunction of sainthood and nationality." "'Americanus' was, and has remained, a symbol of their fusion: a federal identity not merely associated with the work of redemption, but intrinsic to the unfolding pattern of types and antitypes, itself a prophecy to be fulfilled." "Auto-American-biography" (Bercovitch's term for the rhetorical mode in which this process occurs) is, then, the Puritan's great literary invention, one which, the argument continues, not only "has remained," but has decisively shaped all subsequent American culture. "The American Self" of the book's title is not an historical self in the common sense of the word, but an imaginative construct, a self-creation through language. Selves come to know themselves as American by splitting themselves apart into text and reader: reading oneself as text to be interpreted typologically, in light of prophetic destiny, is the Puritan way of becoming American.

The argument is brilliant, and those old grim fathers suddenly bristle with new life. But Bercovitch does not stop there. The Puritan "auto-American-biography" lays the foundation, in his argument, for everything that follows in America (in the usual historical sense of the word). It is, Bercovitch insists, the most decisive, and to all appearances, the only mediation in American culture. The claims are total:

> From a hundred different perspectives—shareholding, education, agrarianism, state or corporation control, free enterprise, various brands of religion—these writers [in the nineteenth century] see

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> themselves as latter-day Nehemiahs summoning the nation toward its Jerusalem. . . . The hermeneutical method . . . shapes the distinctive American approach to virtually every major area of concern. . . . Nowhere is the Puritan vision more clearly in evidence than in the hermeneutics of the American landscape.

If Bercovitch is right our national culture was born in Massachusetts Bay Colony and remains in the possession of Cotton Mather and his imperial imagination.

The broader the argument, however, the less certain I am of exactly what is being argued. For example, what is the status of the Puritan "auto-American-biography?" In his Preface Bercovitch speaks of his subject as "a distinctive symbolic mode." Most of his analysis is finely rhetorical, showing how Mather gets from Protestant hermeneutics to American symbolism. Yet the mode, or what it expresses, is occasionally referred to as an ideology, "the invention of expatriate idealists who declared themselves the party of the future and then proceeded, in an explicit denial of secular history, to impose prophecy upon experience." This was no idle act of the imagination.

At one point Bercovitch indicates that the invention was "a means of social control," which argues for a pretty shrewd sense of secular history. But "social control" is dropped into the text like a stone without ripples. What does it mean? How does it work? Who controlled whom? In what ways did political necessities shape the rhetoric? As Michael Walzer (speaking chiefly of England) has shown, far from being mere idealists, the Puritans in effect founded the modern political consciousness of power. What were the particular political emphases of the New England rhetoric (rhetoric, after all, has to do with persuasion) at specific historical junctures? The Preface promises an analysis of "the interaction of language, myth, and society." By the end of the book, apparently in recognition that the third term had gotten very short shrift, Bercovitch now speaks of "the changing relations between myth and society in America" as requiring "a separate study." He speaks here, too, of the "palpable social effects" of the inherited Puritan habit of subsuming "the facts of social pluralism (ethnic, economic, religious, even personal) in a comprehensive national ideal," as arguing for "the importance of ideology (in the Marxist sense) in the shaping of the United States." But this acknowledgement, in the penultimate sentence of the book, is rather belated. Ideology is palpably what the book is not about. We never see how the rhetoric works to enforce orthodoxy (as, for example, Kai Erikson does in his study of deviance in *Wayward Puritans*), nor do we see the

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content, the specific social vision, embedded (perhaps disguised) in the rhetoric. If ideologists are, as Clifford Geertz tells us, "maps of problematic social reality" that "make it possible to act purposefully within them," then clearly any analysis of an idea or a mode which functions ideologically must take the social reality into more than rhetorical account.

Raising the issue of ideology at the conclusion of the book—and "in the Marxist sense" implying an analysis of classes and class relations—casts the preceding argument in a much different light from that shed by the most prominent terms of the ongoing analysis. The rhetorical terms endow the "auto-American-biography" with the status of a symbolic mode, which is a matter of the form and structure, rather than the content, of thought. On this level Bercovitch is able to say that the mode "continues unabated." Emerson's Romantic language, for example, represents but "new terms in an old context. The rhetorical strategy is the same." On the other hand, the references to ideology imply that language serves nonverbal needs. Unless we are to believe that history itself has been unvarying in America, we are left to wonder whether Emerson's ideological needs were substantively the same as Mather's, and whether "the ugly course of actual events" which the mode was invented as a "compensatory replacement for" is always the same.

The disjunction in the argument, between "symbolic mode" and "ideology," confirms a nagging suspicion provoked by the book throughout, that divided motives are at work. One motive, the most overt, is to give praise to the Puritans for their hitherto neglected achievement. The "auto-American-biography" is credited as the source of an "extraordinary social achievement" in early New England. The invention of "a rhetoric adequate to their sense of mission" was a "daring" act: "Its sustained intensity, its coherence, and the rapidity with which it grew, amounts to an astonishing, possibly unrivaled cultural maturation." The argument rings with praise and celebration. But running alongside is another current, with a barely discernible skeptical intonation. Offhand allusions to "social control," "tautology," "usurpation of American identity," suggest one kind of ideological undercutting. Another kind is hinted at by terms such as "compensation." If Marx is one sleeping-partner, Freud is yet another. Often enough Bercovitch alludes to anxiety as one of the sources of the symbolic mode: the "anxieties of secular time," the anxieties of the "extreme subjectivism" to which the New England clergy was driven in its quest for justification, "The relationship between psychic

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uncertainty and rhetorical self-assertion," Bercovitch writes, "is transparent in the tone of crisis that characterizes much of the literature. With every setback, the assertion of American selfhood rose to a higher pitch." What are we to think of a "cultural maturation" founded on a process that resembles nothing so much as hysteria, at least in this particular account? Hysteria and also narcissism, if we are to believe what Bercovitch says about Emerson, that "the rhetoric he inherited enabled him to dissolve all differences between history and self—as well as all differences within the self (civic, natural, prophetic)—and so to overcome political disenchantment by revealing himself as the representative American."

The problem is that Bercovitch's own point of view toward this supposed disintegration of the boundary between self and reality is unclear, or at least wavering. It is hard to locate a clear and distinct critical position toward the self-aggrandizing and often tyrannizing phenomenon. The desire to complete the design, in effect to prove Mather right by creating a future to his *Magnalia* in which America does mean prophecy, seems to drive all before it, including in some few instances, the plain fact of active social criticism on behalf of universal (not "American") values by Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, and Melville. Yet that desire, manifest in the form of the book, is at odds with the intriguing minor chord of demystifying allusions to ideology and compensation. But can we have it both ways?

The book's disjunctions are, I think, profoundly revealing of a common state of affairs in a criticism that accepts "Americanness" as its ultimate subject. Bercovitch concludes that the leading idea of American literature is the idea of America itself—not a social or political idea, but an abstract prophetic idea disguised as a "mode." No reader of the major writers can deny that America—as mode or theme or image or symbol—plays a critical role in the literature. But to assign that role exclusively to an inherited mode of thought seems to foreclose investigation into the precise social and cultural tensions that figure in the making of specific texts. To reveal as powerfully as Bercovitch has, the solipsistic nature of the Puritan idea of America, and then to claim that this very self-contained idea constitutes the cardinal significance of the literature, is to risk diminishing the writing to cultural pathology, or at least draining the writing of its inner substance.

Some implication of this sort has in fact lurked within much of the criticism in the past decade, and it is to Bercovitch's credit that he has allowed it to surface as the central issue. By imposing the Puritan model upon romantic texts, Bercovitch overstates his case about the

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persistence of the New England strain. The overstatement, however, is based on a typical displacement, in which the literary text is made to serve as the historical ground of its own being as a text. Such criticism seems, like the Puritan model itself, to obviate history by subsuming it under design. The very breadth of the argument argues for its narrowness. *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* seems to me to exhaust one line of inquiry, to take exceptionalism as far as it can go, even beyond its usefulness. And yet, the undercurrent suggesting a wholly different project, one of historical placement and ideological criticism of artifacts of the imagination, raises hopes that this extraordinary and original book might serve as a starting point for a new and even more productive inquiry into the processes of American culture.

ALAN TRACHTENBERG

STRUCTURALIST AMBASSADORS

STRUCTURALIST POETICS: STRUCTURALISM, LINGUISTICS, AND THE STUDY OF LITERATURE. By Jonathan Culler. Cornell University Press. $14.50.

A STRUCTURAL STUDY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY: PROUST, LEIRIS, SARTRE, LEVI-STRAUSS. By Jeffrey Mehlman. Cornell University Press. $15.00.

STRUCTURALISM IN LITERATURE: AN INTRODUCTION. By Robert Scholes. Yale University Press. $12.00.

Structuralism remains a rather mysterious and occasionally dread brand of intellectual magic to most American observers in spite of (or perhaps because of) the accumulation of books and articles in English which introduce, explain, or exemplify structuralism. What we learn about structuralism seems to be called instantly into suspicion by the next helpful overview, so that education and erosion become inextricably linked with one another. Thus, it is somehow unsurprising that two of these books proclaim their "firstness" in the book-jacket blurbs (Culler's book is described as "the first full-length critical

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study of structuralism in literary criticism to be published in any language"; Mehlman's book, more modestly, "presents the first full-length analysis of Leiris's 'essays' and an initial effort in English to delineate the interpretive difference for literary studies implicit in Lacan's reading of Freud"). Almost everything concerning structuralism seems to be always a "first," as if structuralism were a messiah whose imminent arrival continued to be "first" announced over an extraordinarily long period of time.

Mehlman, the one who writes from the position most solidly within structuralism, outlines some of the hazards of "introducing" structuralism in all its firstness. "On the eve of structuralism's arrival in intellectual America," Mehlman turns "briefly to those last seekers of prestige in *Tristes tropiques*, the ambassadors of French culture in America." Although Lévi-Strauss resisted the expectation that he be an ambassador of French culture in his anthropological ventures, Mehlman is less confident that other explicators of Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists will decline—or even recognize—their temptation, which is to appoint themselves as spokesmen for an aggrandized exoticism and, simultaneously, to domesticate and garble that exoticism. "The risks that 'structuralism' will be one more object of private consumption are substantial, their realization the greatest disservice to the spirit of Lévi-Strauss' thought". The transmission of "information" can never be a totally innocent undertaking, whether one wants to think of the transmitter as an intellectual broker, as Mehlman does, or whether one wants to associate him with the sexual mediation of Henry James's most prominent ambassador, Lambert Strether.

It is in the latter form that Robert Scholes presents himself in *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction*. In a remarkable passage at the end of the book, Scholes embroiders a new language of courtly love for structuralism:

> And here a word needs to be said on the relationship between structuralism and love . . . it is precisely the ideology of structuralism that we need most desperately today. And this is where love comes in. It is in the differentiation of the sexes that we learn our earliest and deepest lessons about sameness and difference. Sexual differentiation is the basis, not only of our social systems, but of our logic as well. If there were three sexes, our computers would not have begun to think in terms of binary oppositions.
> . . . In fiction, as in life, the coming together of two human beings in the sexual embrace of love represents the reconciliation of all opposites, the peaceful resolution of all disputes, the melting of all swords into plowshares. In such an embrace, the cyclical dominates the temporal, the lovers are united with all lovers, and we partake of the universal. Marriage is a sacrament of structuralism.

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Scholes is not merely inviting us to consider a new intellectual approach, he is offering a powerful new love potion, and as the proponent of "a politics of structure (and a politics of love)," he sounds like a latter-day Pandarus enjoining us to make love, not war. Structuralism, in his account, is authorized by biology; which makes it all the more startling that it has taken the Western mind centuries to come up with it.

What does Scholes want? Order is one of his primary concerns, and for him order in literary criticism will involve a thorough housecleaning in which we junk the multiple perspectives which reading so untidily generates.

> The average interpretation in American criticism runs to about twenty pages, whether the work being considered is a poem of twenty lines or a novel of two hundred pages. This means that our interpretation of poetry is habitually expansive, extending the significations of the poetic text in various directions, while our interpretation of fiction is habitually reductive and highly selective. Any such 'reading' of a fictional text will be insufficient and hence will require other 'corrective' readings and interpretations. A whole critical industry battens on this situation, culminating in anthologies which present these various and conflicting interpretations for the edification of students. All this is not criminal, of course, but it is mildly ludicrous.

Implicit here (not very far from the surface) is a dream of "complete" or "exhaustive" criticism which will take care of every literary work once and for all. And this viewpoint governs Scholes's selection of structuralists; as if he were writing a consumer's guide to the best machines for cleaning the Augean stables of an excess of "incomplete" critical essays, Scholes pushes the systematizers and quantifiers of structuralism—from Propp to Todorov. Roland Barthes, whose two-hundred page treatment of a thirty page text (*S/Z* on Balzac's "Sarrasine") can be seen as "exhaustive," is, however, too imaginative and idiosyncratic for him. And he refrains from comment on most of the thinkers whom he dubs "high structuralists": Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida, who have been instrumental in exposing the gaps in every system of classification and in attempting to understand the necessary discontinuities which vex all the dreams of "wholeness" which Scholes cherishes.

Scholes's chatty little book, then, may well have been personally satisfying in the writing—an exercise in collecting his own ruminations on literature and "the profession," but his personal view that structuralism is the biggest and best of high humanisms makes the

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book useless at best, misleading at worst. Jeffrey Mehlman's *A Structural Study of Autobiography* is directed toward dismantling the "fantasy of an ideal unity"; and his attacks on American ego psychology (as a psychology of individual "growth"), empiricist criticism (of which Wellek and Warren are the composite incarnation), and bourgeois capitalism, reveal the distance which separates him from Scholes. For while Scholes agrees to dissolve the individual ego in the name of a structuralist humanism, Mehlman would see the drive for unity in such humanism as itself a symptom of a self-delusive individualism. His dense but engaging book, in fact, centers on an analogous problem: that autobiography emerges from a self-centeredness (or narcissism) and from a linguistic structure which are mutually incompatible. For Mehlman, the artist-as-narcissist continually re-enacts an imaginary fusion with another, the mother or a surrogate for her, which does not transcend but veils the presence of a suppressed Oedipal triangle, and language itself reinstates the suppressed elements even as it is being harnessed to eliminate them. Art thus becomes an exercise in repression, and the aesthetic vocabulary of immediacy and unification is merely a sugaring of this bitter knowledge.

Perhaps the most striking and convincing of Mehlman's insights appears in his chapter on Proust: "what the author has served up in Tante Leonie is a feminized parody of the narrator at the beginning of the book." The artist is not a hero but a conflation of Marcel and his mother, a hybrid directly related to Tante Leonie, the tyrannical invalid whose unification with her surroundings is part and parcel of her secret pleasure in the death of her husband. "With the suppression of such threats to one's integrity, the circle of narcissistic gratification can close and indeed consolidate its gains." And in chapters on Leiris, Sartre, and Lévi-Strauss, Mehlman pursues his recognition that the denial of the Oedipal triangle is implicated in the artist's effort to appropriate language as his alone. Yet language, for Mehlman, itself overturns the autobiographer's attempt to consolidate his past times and places, because language militates against all fusions (of time, of place, between persons, and between words and things) by revealing itself as a principle of difference. In fact, Mehlman's use of Freud and Lacan and his view of language converge in his suggestion that the central problem of autobiography involves an inability to grasp psychologically a basic fact about language, that articulation is only possible because of difference. Autobiography, linguistically and psychologically, becomes for him the inevitable return of a "mode of absence" which the text attempts to eradicate. Moreover, autobiogra-

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phy is not a special case; "'literature' is the effort to salvage language from the unconscious constraints of (differential) structure." In fact, he goes so far as to suggest that structuralism and literature are essentially incompatible operations because structuralism questions the exclusiveness of literature's appropriation of language.

While Mehlman challenges "literature" (our notions of the institution of literature) more than structuralism, Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* challenges structuralism to discover how it can be serviceable to literature. Culler's wide-ranging and closely argued survey of structuralism opens with an examination of its underlying linguistic models, which have derived from Saussure's principle that "in language there are nothing but differences *without positive terms.*" Although he recognizes the importance of linguistic models in structuralism's achieving its "rejection of the notion of the 'subject,'" Culler also finds the systems of convention which replace the subject inadequate to account for our experience of literature. And he is particularly strong in debunking attempts like those of Jakobson to work out "discovery procedures" for reading. While he is more impressed by Greimas's work in semantic structures (because "the structural and the semiological cannot be dissociated,") Greimas too falls prey to a fundamental oversight: the structures are curiously divorced from any account of the "strength of the expectations which lead readers to look for certain forms of organization in a text and to find them." Yet despite his quarrels with individual structuralists, Culler understands their basic enterprise quite well: "The task is . . . to construct a theory of literary discourse which would account for the possibilities of interpretation, the 'empty meanings' which support a variety of full meanings, but which do not permit the work to be given just any meaning."

Reading, rather than structuralism per se, is really the focus of Culler's attention, and he is extremely convincing in talking about the ways in which our expectations govern our reading strategies: we read a sentence from a philosophical essay or a news story differently when the words are arranged as poems. But even his efforts to demonstrate the inadequacies of current linguistic and semiological models reveal a curious ambiguity at the heart of his notion of reading. On the one hand, reading remains a (perhaps inevitably) mysterious process; on the other, he wants "empirical data," "a set of facts" about reading which would become the basis for a theory, distinctions between the "functional" and the "nonfunctional"—in short, as he so often says, "evidence." A concomitant penchant toward breaking down novels

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and poems into elements which can be categorized is the result of this desire for data; he wants units which can seem to be compassable in isolation. Tellingly enough, he speaks of Barthes's distinction between the *texte de plaisir* and the *texte de jouissance* as a distinction involving either historical periods or the dominance of certain kinds of elements in the novels. He does so by ignoring the power of the binary logic which he recognizes as pervasive in structuralism, a logic which enables one novel to be both kinds of text at different moments because the context of the reader's choice changes (so that *Anna Karenina* might produce pleasure for a reader who had just finished *Don Quixote*, and joy if the reader had just read a detective story). Thus, when Culler is continually asserting that various examples of structuralist practice vitiate the theories which they would exemplify, he is both denying the inevitable difference between theory and practice and is also restricting the range of possible meanings of those theories and practices. As a critique of Derrida, Culler offers the observation that "to replace a metaphysic of presence by a metaphysic of absence, to invert the relation between speech and writing so that writing engulfs speech, is to lose the distinction which translates a fact of our culture." This is a characteristic gesture on Culler's part: to introduce with the aid of Wittgenstein a notion of the constraints upon our language (and also to imply that Derrida believes that his work can reverse "reality" by fiat, as if the binarism of Derrida's thought would not itself automatically reintroduce that "fact of our culture"). But Culler, in his concern with constraint, tends too often to leave aside or slight another central feature of Wittgenstein's language games—the range of possibilities for linguistic change. For him, the proper "role of linguistics is to emphasize that one must construct a model to explain how sequences have form and meaning for experienced readers, that one must start by isolating a set of facts to be explained, and that hypotheses must be tested by their ability to account for these effects." Literary meaning, like meaning in general, is rule-governed, but one of the rules is that the irrelevant may become relevant, the nonfunctional functional to such a degree that "isolating a set of facts to be explained" becomes an illimitable exercise, like the structuralist project for which Culler wants to establish boundaries. The most valuable insight of the book is the prominence which structuralism and Culler ascribe to reading, but Culler's desire to check the possibilities of infinite regress in structuralist thought finds its justification in an empiricism which demands evidence when we are not certain that we understand even the criteria for recognizing evidence about reading.

FRANCES FERGUSON

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WRITERS' CHOICE

KATHLEEN AGENA: First, some poetry. Norman Dubie's *The Illustrations,* Dave Smith's *Cumberland Station,* and Louise Gluck's *The House on Marshland* are all remarkable in entirely different ways. Dubie, who received a Guggenheim this year, builds *The Illustrations* upon famous and not-so-famous paintings. The expansive, self-effacing quality of his imagination is everywhere evident: "These peasants and their horse, at first light/ Seem absorbed in the pitch-blackness/ . . . The auburn horse/ Represents some inevitable sadness/ That will visit each of us, that visits/ These two peasants struggling in a winter pasture." It is not the single line or image that startles in Dubie's poetry, but rather the way in which metaphors are extended and wildly incongruous things slide effortlessly together: "The man at the glass railway station in Pavlovask/ Crushes out a cigarette with his boot/ . . . he has memorized/ A poem in which a brown naked girl with an ikon-lamp/ Enters a bedroom: her hair reaches down her back and the little blue flame/ Inside the ikon is like a dusty grape/ In the beak of a raven."

Dave Smith has a name that should have led him to become a professional boxer or a train conductor (maybe that's why he named his book *Cumberland Station*). Instead, he writes elegant, uncluttered poetry that leaves you wishing you had insurance, or more of it, or were on a fast train out of town. The lines are sleek, pure and hit the mark like finely guided lasers: "The faces of the young men I see aren't Christ/ . . . though they wear the green clothes of Park Rangers,/the polite smile of Toledo, and one/ thinks you sold him a Buick." Ha! But don't smirk too long; after several quirky, ironic jabs like that Smith will quietly slip in something that will leave you stunned long after the countdown. Something like: "There are apples in the yard, red and soft/ . . . Their seeds more perfect than reason."

Louise Gluck's sparse, haunting poetry leaves you wondering how she generates such complexity of thought and feeling from such clean, unembellished lines. This is from "The Messengers" in *The House on Marshland:* "You have only to wait, they will find you/ . . . You have only to let it happen: that cry—*release, release*—like the moon/ wrenched out of earth and rising/ full in its circle of arrows/ until they come before you/ like dead things, saddled with flesh,/ and you above them, wounded and dominant." There is a trance-like, hypnotic quality to Gluck's poetry which makes it difficult to quote two-to-three

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line segments without doing damage to the integrity of the poems. Since space is limited here, I will simply say that no one who reads poetry should be without *The House on Marshland.*

For fiction, I recommend Andree Connors' *Amateur People,* 1977 winner of the Fiction Collective Braziller First Novel Contest. *Amateur People* is a wild escapade into the inner terrain of the psyche. Wry, reckless, and obviously enraptured with language, Connors zooms along as if writing were as easy as riding a motorcycle. It is a daredevil race at that. There are some rough spots, and Connors will take you to places you may not have wanted to go, but she catapults her way around with such skillful exuberance that you will feel exhilarated, if somewhat shaky, after the ride. There is simply nothing quite like *Amateur People.*

DAVID IGNATOW: What I've admired in the past of Reznikoff's poems still remain for me as the best of his work, his marvelous imagist and objectivist poems, some not more than five lines long. In these modes he ranks with the masters of Chinese poetry, in my opinion. Reznikoff was writing about the immigrant working class mainly during the period when Carl Sandburg was flourishing as a poet of the people and gaining a world-wide reputation, but one has only to compare the work of these two poets to recognize the injustice done to Reznikoff by the silence critics let fall upon his books time after time as they emerged. If his style is calm and seemingly quiescent by comparison with Sandburg's exclamatory manner, Reznikoff is more tellingly precise and ultimately as one reads poem after poem far more profoundly illuminating.

Perhaps one explanation for the neglect with which he was treated during his lifetime could be found in his principles as a poet. Of them all, the principle which he practised most faithfully and that shaped his best long poems derived from the Objectivist ideal to record events, situations and even character studies with the strictest adherence to the facts of the subject so that they could stand free, as it were, of the writer's overt arrangement. In other words, the facts were to speak for themselves, with the author merely arranging them in an order which would allow them to speak. It was a method designed to bring a greater influence to bear upon the reader who would not feel the author intruding to voice his own judgments, thus permitting the reader to feel and appreciate the situation in its "pure" state. In one respect, the method could be likened to the role of the court stenographer or of a journalist

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who in conforming to the strict code of their professions must leave themselves out of the record entirely, but the truth of the matter, for Reznikoff, was that in letting the facts appear to stand freely on the page he believed he could accomplish that much more swiftly and deeply his purpose of the alleviation of the agonies of the people of his poems through the social reforms that he envisioned could be helped to birth through the impact of his poems on the moral sensibilities of his readers. Reznikoff was a passionate moralist but also an artist in control. In short, he was a poet of the classical tradition, and blessed with great gifts.

Now simply to read those poems that he wrote during the first quarter of this century and later is to recognize how true they are for today where the struggle still goes on among the minorities to attain to some reasonable integration with society against the heaviest odds. In the meanwhile, the poets of these minorities still take a backseat and are rarely commented on in the press or given the opportunity to read and/or speak before the large mixed audiences that are enjoyed by the other poets. Things haven't changed very much.

Reznikoff wrote many different kinds of poems, in different styles and on a variety of subjects other than poverty, neglect and suicide. He loved life intensely and wrote some of our most beautiful lyrics of city walking and observing. He was Jewish to the core, albeit an agnostic, and wrote poems passionately and directly on Jewish history past and present. He could also be philosophically worldly and these poems are among his finest. Two of his most ambitious undertakings, "The Holocaust" and "Testimony," each book length in scope, are not included in these two volumes, for obvious reasons of space, but let us hope they will be reissued soon.

Lastly, Milton Hindus's study of Charles Reznikoff, a monograph comprising sixty-seven pages, closely thought through and documented, should be read as the authoritative statement on Reznikoff. Hindus was an intimate of Reznikoff and writes from long acquaintance with the work and man. The study is both biographical and critical, covering every important literary aspect and development, as well as everything of biographical significance related to his work. It is the key to the appreciation of the greatly talented, gentle being who once walked among us without fanfare or hullabaloo, living his ordinary routine existence in tranquility so as to leave us the gift of his works, at his death, out of love and pity for us all.

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